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THE LIFE

OF

ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY,

APOSTLE OF THE ENGLISH.

WITH

Some Account of the Early British Church.

**MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.**

W. B. N. 1845.

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S^{ts} AUGUSTINUS

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE author is sorry that illness and other similar causes have obliged him to delay the publication of the Second Part of this Life very much indeed beyond the time at which he had hoped that it might have appeared.

He ought, perhaps, to add likewise, that it has been in part written under circumstances of a public and private nature, more or less disadvantageous towards the calm thought and continuous attention which are due to a subject so solemn as the Life of a Saint.

He takes this opportunity of expressing his thanks to a writer in the *Christian Remembrancer* of July last, as well for the kind and considerate tone of his criticisms upon the former portion of this Life, as for his observations upon one or two historical matters, which the author will not fail to reconsider and re-examine in the event of another edition of the Life being published.

While the sheets are passing through the press, the Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, has obligingly mentioned that in the Library of that Society are contained two manuscripts of the Gospels, said to have been sent by St. Gregory to St. Augustine, which the author regrets that time does not allow him to investigate. He has just heard also that there is a similar MS. in the Bodleian, which had escaped th

notice of the kind friend to whose researches in that library he is so much indebted.

The pressure under which this Part of the Life of St. Augustine has been necessarily completed, must also be urged as an apology for the omission of all minute reference to Gocelin's Narrative of his Translation. As that Treatise, however, extends to St. Augustine's immediate successors in the See of Canterbury, an opportunity of supplying the omission may, it is hoped, present itself in a future Number of the Series.

THE LIFE OF
St. Augustine,

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, APOSTLE OF THE ENGLISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRITISH CHURCH.—ITS FIRST TEACHERS.

A.D. 51—A.D. 182.

NEVER was the face of a country more speedily and entirely changed than was that of our own island by the inroads of its Saxon conquerors in the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian æra. Secular historians have recounted how those fierce invaders swept all before them like a torrent; drove the ancient people of the land into its farthest recesses, or compelled them to take shelter behind its mountain-fastnesses; establishing themselves in the places which they had laid waste, and demolishing with ruthless hands the comely fabric of civilization and social order which had been gradually growing up in Britain since its subjugation to the Roman power.

They, meanwhile, who read the history of their country with a Christian and Catholic eye, will regard with an interest, such as no mere record of political changes and worldly reverses can inspire, the effect of this sudden and mighty revolution upon the religious condition

and destinies of Britain. To them, the contest between the aboriginal inhabitants of the island and their impetuous conquerors, if contest it can be called, where the parties were so unequally matched in numbers and resources, will seem chiefly memorable, not as it was a trial of human strength, or a struggle for national ascendancy, but as it was a war of extermination waged by a heathen people against one, which, however miserably debased in practice, was yet in name and privilege, Christian. The Church, which had dislodged, by little and little, one vast system of idolatry, was now in turn to be herself displaced by another, less compact and imposing indeed, but not less wicked. Our own venerable historian, St. Bede, in describing the religious consequences of this great national visitation (for such he accounts it), speaks of "buildings public and private, levelled to the ground; priests everywhere massacred at the very altars; and prelates with their flocks swept away by fire and sword."¹ It seemed like a new fulfilment of the prophet's words: "*Ascendit contra eam gens ab Aquilone, quæ ponet terram ejus in solitudinem: et non erit qui habitet in eâ ab homine usque ad pecus, et moti sunt, et abierunt.*"² Thus was heathenism once more dominant in the land which had been trodden by saintly footsteps, and watered by Martyrs' blood.

It is true that our Lord did not, even in this gloomy interval, leave Himself without witness in Britain; and so gave a pledge that He still watched over it, and would one day come to its help. Yet the prospects of His Church in this our island, during the period to which we are referring, were to human eyes sufficiently

¹ *S. Bede, Hist. Eccl. Gent. Ang. lib. i. c. 15.*

² *Jer. l. 3.*

lismal. The land, in its length and breadth, was over-spread by darkness ; gross, palpable, darkness. The light of God's lamp, though not extinct, was pent up where it could not be seen ; the Church, whose place is everywhere, was, in England imprisoned within fixed, and, for all that appeared, impassable, barriers ; it was but coextensive with the now shrivelled boundaries of the ancient British name. As the war drew to a close, and the aboriginal islanders resigned their former possessions into the hands of an enemy whom they could no longer resist, settled heart-burnings, and jealousies, of which it is painful even to think, took the place of more active and sanguinary hostilities. Britain was now a nation divided against itself ; and pride and resentment interposed an effectual obstacle to the reconciliation of the conquerors and the conquered within that universal Fold, "where there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ;" in which all worldly distinctions are neutralized, and all narrowing prejudices over-ruled.

At this critical juncture, it pleased Almighty God to move the heart of His servant St. Gregory, the first of that name who filled the chair of St. Peter, and, for his eminent virtues, surnamed the Great, with compassion towards our afflicted country ; and to direct hither the steps of that blessed Saint, whose life is to form the subject of these humble pages. Happily for England, she had before established, against this her hour of need, a title to those especial favours which are ever in store for a Church of Martyrs. The seed whose manifold return, how long soever delayed, is never-failing in the end, had already been profusely sown in her own soil. And thus, "after many days," the blood of holy *Alban and his companions* which had "cried from

the ground" for mercy upon desolate England, was to receive its answer in the mission of a new Apostle to these shores. Even, as the blood of Stephen, first heir of his Master's Cross, had its abundant harvest in the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, did the sufferings of our glorious Protomartyr win for England the pitying regards of St. Gregory and the Apostolic labours of his blessed son in the faith. For many ages, St. Alban was accounted the Patron of England, and great national blessings were traced, by religious men of old, to the effect of his death, or looked upon as answers to his continual prayers.³ Nor can we doubt that, among the chief fruits of his sufferings and intercession is to be numbered that gracious interposition of our Lord in behalf of His Church, by which this island was for the second time wrested from the Enemy's grasp, and brought under the healing shade of the True Vine.

Although, then, the ancient Church of Britain presented no visible tokens of life to the eyes of our Saint, upon his landing on English ground, we may not question that the way had been really, though secretly, prepared for him, through the power of Divine Grace manifested in the works and sufferings of those who had preceded him in this scene of his labour. And, accordingly, some notice of the ancient Church of Britain, its origin, rise, and decline, seems a fitting, if not necessary, introduction to the history of one, whose very title to our veneration, as the second Founder of the Church in our island, suggests the grateful remembrance of mercies vouchsafed to Britain in the ages before him. As it is due to his memory, to point out

³ See his Life by the Rev. A. Butler. (June 22.)

how entirely the vestiges of Christ had disappeared from that portion, at least, of the island, into which he was immediately called, and thus how strictly his labours were of a Missionary and Apostolic character; so does it seem due to theirs, who went before him, to begin our narrative with some connected account of those earlier triumphs of faith, by which his course was smoothed, rather than with the abrupt mention of the degeneracy, which created the necessity for his mission.

The light of the Gospel is believed to have dawned upon Britain as early as the age of the Apostles. St. Bede, indeed, takes no notice of a Church here, till the time of King Lucius, or towards the end of the second century; but a yet earlier historian, whose name, like his own, is invested with the honours of sanctity, St. Gildas, makes the introduction of Christianity into Britain anterior to a great revolt of the inhabitants, evidently corresponding with that under Boadicea, in A.D. 61.⁴ The same historian appears to direct us for the origin of Christianity in Britain to some epoch midway between a certain great national convulsion, and the abovementioned rise; and it has been thought that, by the former of these critical events, St. Gildas intends the victory obtained over Caractacus by the Emperor Claudius, in the year of our Lord 51;⁵ as a result of which the British king was taken captive, and carried, with his family and retinue, to Rome. Concurrent with this account of St. Gildas are many ancient traditions which, together with such other proofs as the case admits, seem, to make it highly probable, that the introduction of Christianity into Britain was nearly contemporaneous

⁴ S. Gildas de Excid. Brit. § 8, compared with § 6 and § 7.

⁵ Cf. *Bp. Burgess' Tracts on the British Church.*

with the defeat of Caractacus, and owing to circumstances which sprang out of that event.

Among the captives who were led to Rome in the train of the British king, is said to have been one Claudia Ruffina, a virgin, and, as some suppose, daughter of Caractacus, who was forced to take the name of Claudia, as was not unusual, in compliment to her imperial master. It is related, that this Claudia, while at Rome, became the wife of Pudens, a Senator, with whom St. Peter is said to have lodged, on his first arrival in the City. A certain Claudia, the wife of Pudens, is twice celebrated for her beauty and accomplishments by the poet Martial.⁶ Again, among the salutations in St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, written from Rome, we read, "Eubulus greeteth thee, and *Pudens*, and *Linus* and *Claudia*."⁷ Hence it has been supposed, and with much apparent probability, that Claudia who has a place in British story became, while at Rome, the disciple of the Blessed Apostles, SS. Peter and Paul, and, interceding with them, in behalf of her native country, became the means of its conversion. If St. Gildas be rightly understood to refer that event to some period between A.D. 51, and A.D. 61, his account will appear to corroborate, in a remarkable manner, the tradition which fixes upon the residence of Caractacus at Rome as the first occasion of a religious intercourse between that city and Britain. For the year 58, when some members of the family of the British king returned home, is the precise date assigned by Baronius for St. Paul's arrival at Rome, and for St. Peter's journey into Western Europe.

The names of both those great Apostles are associated

⁶ *Mart. lib. 11, ep. 54, and lib. 4, ep. 13.*

⁷ *2 Tim. iv. 21.*

by divines and antiquaries with the earliest annals of the British Church. That St. Paul visited Britain is very generally asserted, both by Catholic and Protestant authorities; though it must be acknowledged that the *written* testimony in favour of this tradition is anything but conclusive. It is certain, indeed, from the accounts of early writers, that the Apostle of the Gentiles penetrated to the "boundary of the West;"⁸ but some have considered this expression to be satisfied by the fact of his visit to Spain, of which he speaks in his Epistle to the Romans. The historical evidence for St. Peter's Apostolic journey to Britain is scantier still, consisting chiefly in a passage quoted by Metaphrastes (a writer of the tenth century, of whose authority Baronius speaks slightly) from Eusebius, and which is not found in the extant works of that author. Yet it has undoubtedly been long received as a pious opinion by the Church at large, as we learn from some often quoted words of St. Innocent I.,⁹ that St. Peter was instrumental in the conversion of the West generally. And this sort of argument, although it ought to be kept quite distinct from documentary and historical proof, and will form no substitute for such proof with those who stipulate for something like legal accuracy in inquiries of this nature, will not be without its effect upon devout minds, accustomed to rest in the thought

⁸ Ἐπὶ τὸ τέμα τῆς δύσεως.

⁹ Quis enim nesciat, aut non advertat, id quod a Principe Apostolorum Petro Romanæ ecclesiæ traditum est, ac nunc usque custoditur, ab omnibus debere servari, nec superduci, aut interduci aliquid quod auctoritatem non habeat, aut aliunde accipere videatur exemplum? præsertim cum sit manifestum, in omnem Italiam, Gallias, Hispanias, Africam atque Siciliam, et insulas interjacentes, nullum instituisse Ecclesias nisi eos quos venerabilis Apostolus Petrus aut ejus successores constituerunt sacerdotes? &c. (Epistola Innocentiæ ad Decentium.

of God's watchful guardianship over His Church. The tradition of St. Peter's immediate, or intimate, connexion, with the British Church has been combated almost universally by Protestant writers ; indeed, it is much to be lamented, that this and other like questions of fact should too often have been forced out of their proper department as mere subjects of history, and invested with a grave theological importance which does not surely belong to them. In the present instance, it is impossible not to feel, with all the respect undoubtedly due to the names of those who have taken part on both sides of this controversy, that the historical testimony to the fact of St. Peter's Apostolical visit to Britain has been as unduly pressed by writers on the affirmative side, as what may be called the moral and theological proof of it has been commonly undervalued on the other. It ought, however, to be mentioned, both to the credit of the particular writer himself, and as important to the fact in dispute, that a learned and zealous Protestant, Dr. Hales, considers the visit of St. Peter to Britain to furnish the most satisfactory of all clues to the solution of an intricate chronological problem.¹

Three other members of the Sacred College, besides St. Peter, are said by some to have preached the Gospel in Britain ; viz. : St. James the Greater, St. Philip, and

Bibliotheca Patrum Vet. tom. viii. p. 586. Ed. Venet. 1772.) This letter is dated 19 March, 416.

Bishop Stillingfleet contends (*Or. Sac. lib.* 3), that this list does not include Britain ; yet three pages farther on, in order to show that British Bishops were at the Council of Sardica, he proves that Britain was in early times comprehended under the name of Gaul. See the passage.

¹ *Vide Dr. Hales's Analysis of Sacred Chronology*, vol. ii. pt. 10.

St. Simon Zelotes ; but without a shadow, as far as appears, even of plausibility. St. Simon is reported to have come to this country, after preaching the Faith in Mauritania, and other parts of Africa. But it seems very doubtful whether St. Simon preached even in Africa, for his mission was to the East ; and, if he did, he certainly returned into the East ; for all the ancient Martyrologies place his martyrdom in Persia. And, as to St. James the Greater, and St. Philip, both of these Apostles suffered martyrdom too early to have been concerned in the foundation of the British Church ; St. James in 43, or 44, and St. Philip ten years only afterwards. Therefore, as the learned Archbishop Ussher observes, the question lies, in fact, between St. Peter and St. Paul. St. Peter is believed to have come to Britain, A. D. 60 ; St. Paul, to have set out on his Western journey in the following year, and to have reached Britain about A. D. 62.²

Other holy men who are thought to have visited our island in the Apostolic age, are St. Joseph of Arimathæa, and St. Aristobulus, of whom the latter is said, but apparently upon very slender grounds, to have been consecrated by St. Paul to the first British bishopric. The tradition which brings St. Joseph of Arimathæa to Britain about the year of our Lord (according to Baronius) 63, is defended by the Protestant archbishops, Ussher and Parker, though by the latter in a spirit of very marked hostility to the special prerogatives of St. Peter. St. Joseph of Arimathæa was venerated in the ancient English Church as the founder, and first abbot, of the celebrated Monastery of Avallonia, afterwards Glastonbury, where are still to be seen the ruins

² Alford, *Annales*, ad ann.

of a chapel dedicated to Almighty God under his tutelage. Here, again, if we are to go by external, documentary, and generally available proof, it must be acknowledged that Mr. Collier, in his *Ecclesiastical History*,³ has made out a strong case against the tradition in question. Yet even after the credit of title-deeds and charters has been shaken, is it easy for reverent minds to conceive that such a belief, if unfounded, would have been allowed to grow up, and entwine itself, as it were, round the hearts of men, bound together by the most solemn obligations, and for the most sacred objects, and that for successive generations, so as to enter into their formal proceedings and be expressed in their most durable monuments? It is surely one thing to admit that such a tradition is not *proveable*, and quite another to say that it is worthless. Upon what evidence do we put faith in the existence of St. George, the Patron of England? Upon such, assuredly, as an acute critic or skilful pleader might easily scatter to the winds; the belief of prejudiced or credulous witnesses, the unwritten record of empty pageants and bauble decorations. On the side of scepticism might be exhibited a powerful array of suspicious legends and exploded acts. Yet after all, what Catholic is there but would count it a profaneness to question the existence of St. George? Grounds of this kind, however, are evidently quite distinct from external, tangible, argumentative proof.⁴

From the testimony of St. Gildas we learn, that

³ Book i. cent. 1.

⁴ Of course the instance is meant as an illustration merely, not a parallel. It is not denied that every Catholic has stronger reason for believing in the existence of St. George than in the visit of St. Joseph of *Arimathæa* to Britain.

Christianity, though early established in Britain, made comparatively little progress among the inhabitants, till it received a new impulse in the persecution under Diocletian.⁵ But while St. Gildas distinctly attests the fact that Christianity, when once brought into Britain maintained its ground without interruption, the records of its progress during the first and greater part of the second century are extremely meagre and unsatisfactory. Even tradition itself is silent upon the annals of this period, except in two particulars; the one, a mission to Pope Clement, in the year 100, upon liturgical questions; the other, an accession to the Church of Britain, about forty years later, of certain doctors and scholars of Granta.

⁵ "Quæ licet ab incolis tepide suscepta sint, apud quosdam tamen integre, et apud alios minus, usque ad persecutionem Diocletiani tyranni novennem." De Excid. Brit. § 9.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRITISH CHURCH.—KING LUCIUS.

A.D. 182—A.D. 192.

THE second great epoch in British Church History is the conversion of King Lucius, which, though the date has been much canvassed, is supposed by competent authorities to have taken place about A.D. 182. The truth of this circumstance undoubtedly rests upon a firmer basis of evidence than that of some among the foregoing details, and it finds a remarkable concurrence of authority, Protestant as well as Catholic, in its favour. The fact, as related by St. Bede the Venerable, was as follows :—"In the 156th¹ year from our Lord's Incarnation, Marcus Antoninus Verus, the fourteenth in succession from Augustus, attained the first power in conjunction with his brother, Aurelius Commodus, in whose time, Eleutherius, a holy man, being vested with the pontificate of the Roman Church, Lucius, king of Britain, sent him a letter, praying to be made a Christian by an act of his authority; the object of which pious entreaty he shortly afterwards obtained; and the Britons, having received the Faith, kept it whole and undefiled, and in peace and quiet, till the times of Diocletian the Emperor."²

This, as we have already said, is the first mention which St. Bede makes of Christianity in Britain. Taken, however, with the account of St. Gildas, before mentioned,

¹ It must be remembered that St. Bede's chronology is often inaccurate.

² S. Bede, Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 4.

his words cannot be thought to imply more than what is universally acknowledged, that the Faith was not openly embraced by the British nation till the days of Lucius.

From sources of greater or less authenticity, we learn that Lucius, though he did not determine upon professing Christianity till towards the close of his life, was no stranger to it in his earlier years. The instrument of his early religious convictions is said by some to have been St. Timothy, one of the four sainted children of SS. Pudens and Claudia.³ A more credible tradition records, that Lucius obtained the rudiments of the Christian faith through the teaching of St. Elvanus, whom some authors suppose to have been one of the aforementioned converts of Granta; but who is generally said to have been a brother of the Monastery of Avallonia. But from whomsoever the good king Lucius derived his first knowledge of the Christian religion, certain it is that he could not be persuaded to avow it till towards the close of his life, when he had been king nearly sixty years. Several causes are said to have put him upon seeking the grace of eternal life through the Sacraments of the Church. He had now enjoyed ample means of observing the fruits of the Christian religion in the holy lives of its professors. He was no stranger to the doctrine of a Judgement to come, and knew that he must shortly be called away to account for his use of the opportunities vouchsafed him. But the more immediate and constraining motive, under Divine Providence, of his happy resolution, appears to

³ The others were, his brother, St. Novatus, and his sisters SS. Praxedes and Pudentiana, Virgins. See Cressy, Hist. of the Church of Brittany.

have been the great and signal deliverance of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and all his army by the prayers of the Christian soldiery, the news of which merciful interposition had lately come to Britain, and had produced a powerful impression upon the king's mind ; who, being now fully satisfied in his heart of the Divine original and wonderful effects of that holy creed, towards which he had been long favourably disposed, sent for his faithful counsellor Elvanus, and made him a party to his intention of entreating instant admission into the fold of Christ. Desiring, also, to obtain an authoritative rule for the better government of the Church in his kingdom, he resolved upon seeking counsel in his difficulty, and the See of Rome was the quarter to which his thoughts instinctively turned. He chose, as his representatives in this most important mission, Elvanus, and another clergyman named Medwinus, of the province of the Belgæ.⁴ These sacred ambassadors were commissioned to prefer a request that the holy Father, Eleutherius, in whom the Roman pontificate was then vested, would send to Britain persons duly qualified and authorized to instruct the king and his subjects, and to celebrate, and administer to them, the Divine Mysteries. He also desired to be furnished with rules for the government of the British Church, and, as some add, with a transcript of the famous Roman laws, to serve as the basis of a national code. Eleutherius was a prelate of great piety and virtue, as is sufficiently shewn by the place which his name holds in the memory and affections of the Church.⁵ He succeeded St. Soter

⁴ Comprising the present counties of Hants, Wilts, and Somerset.

⁵ He is mentioned in the Calendar on May 26, St. Augustine of Canterbury's day.

in the Supreme Pontificate in 176, and presided over the Church when it was grievously harassed by the blasphemous doctrine of the Montanists. Some suppose that, in the earlier and less dangerous stages of this heresy, the good Pope Eleutherius, was led to give it some sort of countenance ; but this is denied by others, who ascribe this act of favour not to St. Eleutherius, but to his successor, Victor. At all events, whether the judgment were given by St. Eleutherius or by another, it was revoked upon fuller information.

Different conjectures have been thrown out by learned ecclesiastical antiquaries, upon the probable motives by which king Lucius was actuated in resorting to Rome for the sacraments of the Church, and for instruction in Christian doctrine : a circumstance rendered the more worthy of remark by the fame of the great St. Irenæus, at that time Bishop of Lyons, through, or near, which city the messengers of Lucius must have passed on their way to Rome. There can be no doubt that, in learning and acquirements, St. Eleutherius, holy man as he was, fell infinitely short of this famous Bishop, who is said by an ancient father, to have been "the most accurate expositor of doctrine in his day." Indeed, there appears absolutely no reason whatever, why king Lucius should have gone farther for advice, which he might have obtained nearer, unless it were that he, or rather the British Church of his time, acknowledged the See of Rome, even at that early age, and when the great spiritual Monarchy of which it afterwards became the centre, was not as yet fully developed, or perfectly organized, as invested with some special prerogatives of rank and authority. And, had the messengers of Lucius paused on their way to consult the great Bishop of Lyons, certainly he would have given them no other advice

than that which he has left on record, when he says, "To the Roman Church, by reason of its more powerful principality, it is necessary that every Church, that is to say, the faithful in every place, should have recourse,⁶ since in it the universal tradition received from the Apostles is safely preserved."⁷

The good Pope Eleutherius was in raptures of joy on receiving the message of the British king, and caused *Gloria in excelsis* to be chanted in commemoration of the happy event.⁸ He commissioned two holy Bishops, by name Fugatius and Damianus, to accompany SS. Elvanus and Medwinus back to Britain; and it is added by some writers, that he raised St. Elvanus himself to the Episcopal dignity. He is related, likewise, to have sent the necessary instructions for the ordering of the British Church, but to have declined complying with the king's request for a copy of the Roman laws, on the ground that they had no direct bearing upon Christian institutions.

When the holy legates arrived in Britain, the king, queen, and all their household, were immediately baptized. The name of the queen has not come down to us; but a sister of Lucius, called Emerita, is said to have attained the honours of a Saint.

SS. Fugatius and Damianus, having preached the Word of Life to the king and his family, next proceeded into the several parts of Britain. At the end of three years, they returned to Rome, reported the good success of their mission, and obtained from the holy Father a confirmation of their acts. They afterwards returned to Britain, and renewed their Apostolic travels,

⁶ Convenire.

⁷ S. Iren. cont. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 3.

⁸ See *Ussher's Primord. Eccl.* 10.

in the course of which they are said to have visited the Isle of Avallonia, the seat of the famous Monastery of Glastonbury, which had then become a covert for wild beasts.⁹ There they discovered, by Divine guidance, the ancient oratory dedicated to our Lord, in honour of His Blessed Mother, in which they continually celebrated the Divine praises. It is also related of the same holy men, that they founded at Avallonia two other chapels, one under the title of the blessed Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, the other under that of St. Michael the Archangel. It is added, that they established a succession of twelve devout persons, in memory of the twelve companions of St. Joseph. Whether they died at Avallonia is doubtful; but a very authentic tradition records that they continued there nine years. Harpsfield places the scene of their deaths in South Wales, near the city of Llandaff, where a church was afterwards built under their patronage. Their names occur on May 24 in the English Martyrologies, where they are said to have died in the year 191. About the same time, king Lucius was called away from an earthly to a heavenly crown; having occupied, according to a very ancient belief, some of the latter years of his life in spreading the Christian faith among the nations of Germany and Switzerland.

It cannot be doubted that the conversion of this good king, St. Lucius, was the beginning of a new era in the Church of Britain, and that very many of his subjects were moved by his example to embrace the Faith. It is equally certain, that the Lord raised up many devoted servants to work in this promising field of ministerial labour; true though it also is, that their memorial has utterly perished. Of the period between the death of king

⁹ Capgrave in Vita S. Josephi.

Lucius and the martyrdom of St. Alban, there is all but a total dearth of trustworthy information ; but we gather from the testimony of foreign writers, as well as from that of own sainted historians Gildas and Bede, that the Church of Britain was in a flourishing state during this interval, consisting of almost a century. And now the British Church is said to have been placed under the government of twenty-eight Bishops, and three Metropolitans, the chief see being founded in London. Bishop Stillingfleet, indeed, gives reasons which appear satisfactory, for believing that there was a succession of Bishops in the British Church from the first, though he considers that, under king Lucius, steps were taken for the increase and consolidation of the Episcopate. If there were Bishops in Britain when St. Lucius sent his embassy to Rome, it is all the more remarkable that he should have resorted to a foreign quarter for aid and counsel. And even if there were no Bishops in this country, he need not, as we have seen, have gone so far as Rome to supply the want. Let us but be content to follow the Church of all ages in ascribing a right of precedence to the See of the Apostles, and the conduct of king Lucius becomes perfectly intelligible, without the necessity of supposing any flaw in the succession of the ancient British Episcopate, or involving any disparagement of the claims of other European prelates.

CHAPTER III.

THE BRITISH CHURCH. — ST. ALBAN AND THE FRUITS OF HIS MARTYRDOM.

A D. 192—A.D. 359.

AFTER king Lucius, we lose sight of the stream of British Church history for nearly a century, when it reappears in the age of St. Alban and his companions, and then flows on more evenly and steadily till the time of the Saxon invasion. And, just as the reappearance of a stream at intervals is a proof that its course has been all the while continuous, though hidden, so passages in the history of the ancient British Church, such as the Martyrdom of St. Alban, betoken the presence of a real, though latent, faith, in the ages preceding. The heroic virtue of Alban and Amphibalus, Aaron and Julius, and of those "very many others, whose souls, in the midst of divers tortures and unprecedented mangling of the limbs, were removed in the very crisis of their agony to the joys of the supernal city,"¹ was no sudden outbreak of enthusiasm, no mere happy coincidence, or insulated phenomenon, but had its origin in causes of long standing and wide prevalence, and so sheds a lustre over the period which matured it, as well as over that in which it was displayed.

Our own island, moreover, appears to have enjoyed a profound rest, under the earlier of the persecutions by

¹ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 7.

which other Churches within the boundaries of the Roman Empire were visited and desolated. At length, in the reign of Diocletian and his colleague Maximian, it fell under the stroke of heathen rage and malice. The last and fiercest of the onslaughts, which during ten years deluged Christendom with blood, penetrated even into Britain; where, in the words of the holy Gildas, "God, who wills all men to be saved, and calls sinners as well as those that account themselves righteous, was pleased to magnify His mercy among us; and, of His own free goodness, to kindle in this island the brightest of luminaries, even His holy Martyrs; whose places of sepulture and of suffering, had not our citizens for the sins of our nation been robbed of them by the mournful incursion of barbarians, would inspire no little ardour of Divine love into the minds of all beholders; I speak of St. Alban of Verulam, Aaron and Julius, of the city of the Legions,² and the rest, of either sex, who, in divers places, maintained their ground in Christ's battle with consummate magnanimity."³

The Christian heroism of these blessed servants and soldiers of Christ, and especially of our glorious Protomartyr, might well form the subject of distinct biographies. It will be sufficient in this place to give a mere outline of its principal features.

St. Alban was converted to the Christian faith by Amphibalus, a clergyman, whom he had sheltered from his persecutors. Information having been given to the authorities as to the place where Amphibalus lay concealed, search was made for him in Alban's house; upon which his host, putting on his military cloak, submitted to be seized by the officers in his stead. When brought be-

² *Caerleon on the Usk.*

³ *S. Gildas de Excid. Br. § 10.*

fore the judge, who happened to be engaged in an idolatrous festival, St. Alban was first asked to join in the heathen worship, and, upon his refusal, was immediately tortured with scourges, and afterwards beheaded. Two miracles, according to St. Bede, were vouchsafed at the time of his death; the former of which led to the conversion of a person named Heraclius, who had been engaged to perform the office of his executioner; and another, who was found ready for the same unholy work, was instantaneously struck with blindness, his eyes falling to the ground at the same moment with the head of his victim. Many of the spectators, according to Harpsfield, were brought over to the faith on the spot by the sight of the holy Martyr's constancy, and of the miracles which accompanied his sufferings; and, following St. Amphibalus, St. Alban's guest and spiritual father, into Wales, received the Sacrament of Regeneration at his hands. Shortly afterwards, and during the same persecution, St. Amphibalus suffered martyrdom at Redbourne, not far from St. Alban's; and SS. Aaron and Julius, at Caerleon on the Usk. There were also, according to St. Gildas and St. Bede, many other cases of martyrdom at the same time. The survivors took shelter in "deserts and caves of the earth." For seven years the persecution raged with unabated fury; many churches were levelled with the ground, and others converted into heathen temples. Among those who, about this time, received the crown of martyrdom, or confessorship, were St. Stephanus, and St. Augulus, successive Bishops of London.

Peace was at length restored to the Church under Constantius, who, in conjunction with Galerius, assumed the imperial purple when Diocletian and Maximian abdicated. Constantius, to whom the administration of

Britain had been specially⁴ entrusted during the preceding reign, continued his charge under a new title, and with independent authority. The British Church speedily felt the effects of his clemency; the Christians issued⁵ from their retreats; the churches were rebuilt; chantries erected in honour of the Martyrs; festivals restored, with the solemn rites of worship; and the voice of joy and gladness once more heard throughout the land. Constantius died at York, fifteen months after his succession to the empire, in the year 306.

The British Church was certainly represented at the Council of Arles in 314, and some consider, at that of Nicæa also, eleven years afterwards, though this appears very doubtful. The names of the British Bishops at Arles were Eborius, Restitutus, and Adelfius; of whom Eborius and Restitutus filled the thrones respectively, of York and London. The see of Adelfius is more questionable; by most it is considered to have been Colchester, or rather Maldon; but Bishop Stillingfleet decides in favour of Caerleon, while other learned writers incline, and with much apparent reason, to Lincoln.

At the council of Arles, it was determined that Easter should be kept on the same day in all parts of the Church. This canon was directed against such Orientals as followed the Quartodeciman rule.⁶ It was also resolved to degrade those of the clergy who had surrendered to heathens, during persecution, any of the sacred books belonging to churches, or of the vessels employed in the "offering" of the Holy Sacrifice. Other canons, chiefly

⁴ Gibbon, c. xiii.

⁵ S. Gildas de Excid. Brit. § 13; and S. Bede, H. E. lib. i. c. 8.

⁶ The question about keeping Easter which afterwards arose in Britain, and which shall be noticed in its place, appears to have been of slighter importance.

on points of discipline, were passed; and the decrees in general were forwarded to St. Sylvester, the reigning Pope, to be circulated by him throughout the Church.⁷

At the disastrous Council of Ariminum, in 359, the British Bishops were betrayed with the rest into signing the heretical Confession. On this occasion we are told that the Arian Emperor Constantius offered to supply the assembled prelates with lodgings and entertainment at the public expense, but none of them could be found to accept the suspicious boon, except the three from Britain, who, being too poor to provide for themselves at their own charges, and too independent to lay themselves under an obligation to the other Bishops, fell in with the Emperor's proposal, and were accordingly maintained out of the imperial exchequer.

An ancient author commends the Bishops of Britain for refusing to be burthensome to their brother prelates; but it is rather to be feared, observes Bishop Stillingfleet, "that the Emperor's kindness was a snare to their consciences." On the whole, there seems reason to apprehend that the British Church suffered, with others, from the Arian infection, though whether its declension into heresy were the cause, or the effect, of the unhappy step taken by its representatives at Ariminum, is more questionable. To the fact of this corruption, however, whether greater or less, and whensoever, or wheresoever, originating, the testimony of St. Bede is but too explicit.⁸

⁷ The words used in addressing the Pope, were as follows:—*Placuit etiam antequam a te, qui majores dioceses tenes, per te potissimum omnibus insinuari.*

⁸ *Ariana vesania, corrupto orbe toto, hanc etiam insulam extra orbem tam longe remotam veneno sui infecit erroris, et, hanc quasi viâ pestilentie trans oceanum patefactâ, non mora, omnis se lues hæreseos cujusque, insulæ, novi semper aliquid audire gaudenti, et nihil certi firmiter obtinenti, infudit.*

We have seen that the British Bishops were too poor to maintain themselves at Ariminum. The necessitous condition of their Church at this time, might have arisen from the combined effects of persecution and internal wars; the former had probably deprived the Church of her lands and stated revenues, while the latter had impoverished the country, and so tended to lessen the amount of the people's offerings. It is said that king Lucius made over to the Church the lands which had formerly belonged to the heathen temples, and bestowed upon it many gifts and privileges besides. If so, it is evident that great losses must have been sustained before the Council of Ariminum, where the Bishops of Britain were found unequal to a charge commonly borne by the different Churches of Christendom, in behalf of their representatives at General Councils. And for these, the combined operation of the persecution under Diocletian, and of the harassing wars with the Scots and Picts, will sufficiently account.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRITISH CHURCH.—VISITS OF ST. GERMANUS.

A.D. 359—A.D. 520.

IN the fifth century, the British Church received much damage from the inroads of the Pelagian heresy. Some have inferred from St. Bede's words, that Pelagius himself, after his condemnation at Rome, returned to Britain, of which he was a native, and poisoned the Church with his baneful doctrine. But the more immediate author of the mischief in our own island appears to have been not Pelagius, but Agricola, son of Severianus, a Bishop,¹ who had fallen into the heresy. This Agricola came over from Gaul about the year 425, and laboured, among others,² to corrupt the Church in this country. His attempt was, as it seems, but too successful in many quarters; at length the Bishops of Britain resolved upon laying their grievances before their brethren in Gaul, and asking for help. The spiritual necessities of our island were likewise, at this time, an object of anxious interest to Pope St. Celestine, who had lately sent SS. Patrick and Palladius to preach the Gospel in Ireland, and in the northern parts of Britain. On hearing from Palladius, of the danger which threatened the southern provinces of the island from the progress of Pelagianism, the holy Pontiff was no less eager to counteract the spread of the heretical leaven than he had before shewn himself to

¹ *S. Bede, lib. i. c. 17.*² *Vide Stillingfleet, Orig. Brit. c. 4.*

reclaim the pagan inhabitants of the island from idolatry and superstition. St. Celestine is accordingly believed, upon the authority of a contemporary historian, to have conferred with the Bishops of Gaul upon the state of the British Church, and to have sanctioned their choice of St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, as a proper person to go to its relief.³ St. Germanus was unanimously selected for this important charge at a Council summoned in Gaul upon receipt of the letters from Britain, to which he was soon after sent in company with St. Lupus, Bishop of Troyes.⁴

The two holy prelates embarked in the winter season, and were soon overtaken by a violent storm, raised, says the religious historian, by the malice of evil spirits, to defeat the object upon which the blessed Missionaries were bent. All efforts to save the vessel became fruitless; and no resource was left but in prayer. It so happened, that at the moment of greatest danger, St. Germanus was asleep. When all was now given up for lost, St. Lupus and the whole crew betook themselves to the older Bishop, and besought his intercessions; upon which St. Germanus proceeded to dip his hand in holy water,⁵ and sprinkled it upon the waves in the name of the Adorable Trinity; at the same time inviting his colleague and the whole ship's company to join him in prayer. In an instant all were on their knees, and a prayer for mercy rose to Heaven as the voice of a single man. The sky grew bright, and the

³ Agricola Pelagianus, Severiani Episcopi Pelagiani filius, Ecclesias Britanniae dogmatis sui insinuatione corruptit. Sed ad actionem Palladii Diaconi Papa Celestinus Germanum Autissiodorensem Episcopum vice sua mittit, et disturbatis hæreticis, Britannos ad Catholicam fidem redigit. Prosperi Chronicon.

⁴ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 17.

⁵ *Another account says oil.* Constantius, § 46.

sea calm; favourable winds sprang up, and in a short time the ship was safe in the British port.

The Bishops were met, on landing, by a vast concourse of people, and the whole island was speedily filled with the rumour of their preaching, miracles, and sanctity. It was usual, in those days of the Church, under circumstances of emergency, (such, for instance, as the prevalence of idolatry or heresy,) to proclaim God's Truth, not within the walls of churches only, but in the fields and highways. Such a course is no otherwise irregular, than as it is adopted (as has commonly been the case in Protestant times and countries) without, or against, authority. In the instance to which we are now referring, the necessity was undoubtedly urgent: and as the field or street preachers were here Bishops, acting, as it would seem, under the sanction of the Pope, no charge of insubordination could possibly be made good against them. As far, too, as success is a criterion of good preaching, that of SS. Germanus and Lupus is proved to have been of the highest order; for we are told that it tended everywhere to root the Catholics in their belief, and to shame the misguided out of their errors. The people, indeed, counted these wonderful strangers as Apostles; so glorious was their testimony, so gracious their deportment, and so commanding the authority with which they spoke. Their learning added weight, and their sanctity persuasiveness, to all they said; insomuch that the whole country seemed to be brought round with incredible rapidity to the doctrine of their discourses.

In the mean time, the heretical opponents of Divine Grace saw with evident vexation, that their day was gone by. At first they withdrew from public observation, and mourned in secret the loss of their influence.

and the dropping off of their followers; presently however, growing desperate, they resolved upon inviting the Catholics to a public discussion. The place of meeting was to be, of all others, Verulam, where, no long time before, holy Alban had won the crown of Martyrdom, and which was afterwards called by his name. This sacred spot was now to become the scene of a new victory, in which the enemies of the Cross of Christ were not to be, as before, vanquished silently and by patience, but openly and publicly confounded as by a voice from Heaven. When the time of meeting had come, the heretics were seen advancing to the ground, attended by a long train of persons in costly habits; for their success appears to have been chiefly among the rich. They were evidently bent upon making a grand display; they seemed to feel that their popularity had declined from the moment that SS. Germanus and Lupus had set foot in this country; and now they rallied all their forces and put forth their best appearance, with the view of shewing the world that they were not disheartened. They do not seem to have arrived at once, or even speedily, at this determination; however, in the end, the more striking and adventurous policy was preferred. An immense crowd was collected at the place of meeting, including a great number of women and children, as well as men, all of whom, says St. Bede, looked upon themselves not merely as parties who had a deep interest in the issue of the conference (as in truth they had), but as in some sort umpires in the trial. There was, as may be supposed, a very marked difference between the spirit with which the two sides entered upon the contest; and this difference was indicated by the very appearance which they severally presented to the eye. *As widely, observes St. Bede, as Divine Faith is removed*

from human presumption, and retiring piety from forward and clamorous ostentation, did the partizans of Pelagius differ from the disciples of Christ. In truth it must have been a very striking sight; and, in the present advancing state of Catholic art amongst us, it is not too much to hope that the "Conference of Verulam" may come to be selected as an appropriate subject for some great national picture. The reader will probably ere this have formed a mental comparison, or contrast, between the scene now attempted to be set before him, and one in which the prophet Elijah bore a conspicuous part. It was not, indeed, a question now, as then, between God and Baal; yet can it be so certainly pronounced that it was not one between CHRIST and Antichrist? For, that Pelagianism was at least one palpable form of the power which sets up self against God, will hardly be denied by any religious person. But to proceed. The Pelagians, by mutual agreement, were the first speakers; but it soon appeared that they had scarcely anything to say in defence of their tenets; still they spoke, and that at great length; till, at last, the audience were quite tired out by the multitude of their pompous but empty words. Scripture was of course their only standard of appeal; and what could be so hopeless as the attempt to prove from Scripture, that fallen man can originate good in himself? At length they stopped, and the Bishops rose, one after the other, to reply. St. Germanus was found, to the surprise of his opponents as well as of the audience, to have a vast fund of words at his command; he had studied eloquence and the civil law at Rome, and in his youth had actually pleaded causes in court. His Scripture proofs of the Catholic doctrine were absolutely overwhelming; *he enforced them, too, as his knowledge and great*

erudition enabled him, by arguments of a truly Divine wisdom, and illustrated them by the testimony of ecclesiastical authorities. The Catholic speakers were not afraid of making the most downright, and, to their opponents, inconvenient and oppressive statements;⁶ so great was the power of their cause, so ample the resources of evidence to which they could appeal in support of it. The heretics were thus effectually put down; the people testified their joy by loud acclamations, and were deterred by nothing but the venerable presence of the Bishops, and a regard to the sanctity of the place, and the solemnity of the occasion, from laying violent hands upon the defeated party. At the close of the conference, a certain tribune and his wife presented themselves before the Bishops, entreating their prayers in behalf of a little blind daughter, ten years of age. The Bishops, with the view of convicting their opponents upon their own acknowledgment, referred them to the Pelagians; but they conscience-stricken and utterly dispirited, declared their inability to give any help, and referred them back to the Bishops. The latter then offered a short prayer, and St. Germanus made a solemn invocation of the Holy Trinity. At the same moment, he took from his side a little case of relics, which he was in the habit of wearing round his neck, and, in the presence of all, applied it to the eyes of the little girl, whose sight was immediately restored. We read in the Old Testament of a yet more amazing miracle performed by contact with the relics of a Saint; and who will deny, that the confutation of Pelagius was "cause" enough to warrant some special interposition of Divine power? However, it is safest, as well as most religious, to leave in God's hands the determination of the reasons

⁶ *Assertiones molestissimas.* S. Bede, lib. i. c. 17.

which call for His supernatural interferences. In the case before us, the miracle appears to have completely (if it may be said with reverence) answered its end ; it was regarded, for the time at least, as still more conclusive of the question between the Catholics and the heretics than the result of the previous debate. For, after that day, continues the sainted historian, all liking for the Pelagian tenets was thoroughly rooted out of every one's mind ; and the doctrine of the Bishops was universally followed with a holy eagerness.

Before quitting the neighbourhood of Verulam, the prelates went on a visit to the tomb of St. Alban. When they had reached the hallowed spot, St. Germanus made a short prayer, and then called upon some of the bystanders to open the tomb, in which he proceeded to deposit the precious relics of the Apostles and Martyrs which he carried about him ; considering it fit, according to the historian, that the bones of Saints from different parts of the world, whose parity of merit had raised them alike to Heaven, should rest in a common sanctuary. Having duly disposed of these inestimable treasures, St. Germanus gathered up a portion of dust, upon which the traces of St. Alban's blood were still visible, and carried it away to Auxerre, where he built a Church to the honour of the Saint, and deposited his relics near the altar.

The reader has already received a larger share of the history of St. Germanus than is quite consistent with the very general character of this introductory sketch ; and yet the mighty reformation effected in our island, under the guidance, and through the intercessions, of this great prelate, is an incident in British ecclesiastical story, too momentous to be lightly passed over, while it is *difficult to convey* any suitable idea of it, without

dwelling, at a disproportionate length, upon the personal history of the Saint who was the great agent in promoting it.

Before leaving Britain, St. Germanus was called to take part in a very different scene from that of the Verulam Conference. Some years before the arrival of Hengist and Horsa, in 449, the Saxons inhabiting the coast between Denmark and the Rhine were in the habit of making descents upon this island; and, while the two Bishops of Gaul were in the country, joined with the Picts, who occupied the northern parts of Britain, in attacking the more southern provinces. So great was the name which the holy Bishops had established among the Britons, that their protection was at once sought against the new enemy. Accordingly, they proceeded to the scene of action, where their presence inspired such confidence, that it seemed, says the historian, like the sudden appearance of some vast and unlooked-for reinforcement of troops. The Saints occupied themselves, during their stay in the camp, in endeavouring to convert those of the army who were still idolaters, and to introduce a reformation of life and manners among such as professed the Christian faith. It happened to be Lent: and a vast number of applications were made to the Bishops for admission to the Sacrament of Baptism at the approaching Easter. The soldiers, with the help of the Bishops, erected in the camp a temporary church, made of green boughs twisted together, in which the catechumens were received, and the festival celebrated with great devotion. The army proceeded to battle "with the dew of Baptism," says St. Bede, "fresh upon it;" strong in a hidden might, though, to all appearance, small in numbers and weak *in resources*. We have already seen how the early edu-

cation of St. Germanus favoured him in a former emergency ; now we find him turning the experience of other days to account in a different line. When young, he had filled, under the Emperor Honorius, the office of duke and commander-in-chief of his province. St. Germanus was still in the prime of his years, when circumstances forced him into this novel situation. Upon information that the combined armies of the Saxons and Picts were approaching, he at once resolved upon putting himself at the head of the British forces. Having led the troops into a narrow defile, he gave orders to them to repeat after him, in one loud and general shout, the word for which he was to give them the signal. When the Saxons drew near, with all the confidence of men secure of victory, the holy Bishops pronounced, three successive times, the word ALLELUIA, which was immediately taken up by the whole British army, and chanted in universal chorus. The sound was repeated and reverberated by the echo from the mountains, and with such violence, that the rocks, and even the very heavens themselves, seemed to tremble. The barbarians, supposing that so loud a shout must issue from an immense body of men, threw down their arms in a panic and ran away in all directions. Many were drowned in attempting to cross a rapid river which intercepted their retreat. The Britons remained quiet spectators of this strange scene : masters of a spoil surrendered without a struggle, and gainers of a victory achieved without bloodshed. The Bishops especially rejoiced that their new converts had been enabled to save their country without even risk to the Christian tempers of meekness and charity ; while all seemed to feel that faith and prayer are the most serviceable of *arms*, and *Saints* and *Angels* the most powerful of

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allies. The scene of this memorable event is said to have been a piece of ground, remarkable for the picturesque beauty of its situation, in the neighbourhood of Mold, in Flintshire, which is still called by the name of "Maes Garmon," or German's Field. The holy Bishops, having thus delivered Britain from a two-fold scourge, war and heresy, returned home, "the blessing of St. Alban," says the historian, "going along with them," and, after a prosperous voyage, (which, in those religious times, and especially in so early and rude a state of the art of navigation, was always regarded as an especial token of Divine protection,) were restored to the anxious wishes, and ardent prayers, of their respective flocks.

After some years, probably in 446 or 447, symptoms of the Pelagian infection began once more to manifest themselves in Britain, and the clergy unanimously determined upon again having recourse to the powerful aid of St. Germanus. Though now almost seventy years of age, the zealous Bishop lost no time in acceding to their prayer, and, choosing as his associate, Severus, Archbishop of Treves, a prelate of great sanctity, and a disciple of his former colleague, St. Lupus repaired, for the second time, to the shores of Britain. He had no sooner landed, than he received a visit from Elafius, a person of account in the island, bringing with him a son, in the flower of his age, who was labouring under a grievous bodily affliction. The nerves of one of his limbs were paralyzed, and the flesh withered, so that he could not put his foot to the ground. St. Germanus told him to sit down, and, applying his hand to the diseased limb, wrought an instantaneous cure. The miracle, as in the former instance, produced a great *and immediate* sensation, and disposed all hearers in

favour of the wondrous Bishop. St. Germanus and his companion had the comfort of finding that the great body of the British Church was still staunch in the Faith ; the error had made comparatively little progress, and, by dint of wholesome admonitions to the wavering, and strong measures adopted against the authors of the mischief, who were, by the unanimous voice of the Church, banished the island, the heresy was once more extirpated. As the best security against its revival, St. Germanus established schools in different places, especially two very famous in South Wales, which he entrusted to the care of SS. Iltutus and Dubricius. Among the disciples of the former, were St. Gildas, the historian, St. Malo, and St. Daniel, afterwards Bishop of Bangor. The celebrated school of Bencor, in Flintshire, which will be mentioned in the sequel, was also one of the fruits of St. Germanus' zeal. Indeed, this holy Bishop has been sometimes regarded as a kind of second Apostle of Britain.

Many persons will probably be curious to know something of the practice of the British Church in the days of St. Germanus. And it is important to shew the great antiquity of certain ecclesiastical customs, the origin of which is sometimes referred to a later period. One characteristic of the British Church in the fifth century, was the great honour paid to the sanctuaries and offices of religion. Every person who met a priest, made obeisance to him, and asked him for his blessing. Similar marks of respect were also paid to churches and the appurtenances of Divine worship, such as bells, service-books, and vestments. Of the devotion entertained towards the relics of the Saints, we have already had occasion to remark more than one striking instance. *Again, the holy cross was an object of singular veneration.*

ration. The rite of Confirmation was accompanied by the use of the chrism. Penances were commonly performed ; and, of all kinds of penitential service, pilgrimages to Rome were the most popular, as well as the most approved.

With these common and familiar features of the great ceremonial system of the Catholic Church were joined, in the British portion of it, others, more or less national. Thus, we are told that no one partook of a loaf of bread without reserving a part of it for the poor. Under the idea of "doing all to the glory of God," it was usual for persons to sit three together at their meals, in commemoration of the Blessed Trinity. Again, penances, and especially pilgrimages to Rome, were accompanied by the offering of tithes ; two-thirds of which were given to the Church in which the penitent had been baptized, and the remainder to the Bishop of the Diocese.

After St. Germanus had returned for the second time to France, the Britons continued to suffer from the incursions of their northern neighbours, the Scots and Picts ; till, at length, in imminent danger of total subjection, they sent to invite the Saxons to their aid. Nothing can be more deplorable than the picture which the historian, St. Gildas, himself a Briton, has drawn of the moral condition of his countrymen at this time. During the intervals of rest from war, and plenty after famine, which occurred in the midst of their contest with the Scots and Picts, the most frightful sensuality seems to have grown up ; and, along with it, such a total corruption of principle as threatened much more than any merely temporary demoralization of the national character. "What was worse than all," says the *historian*, after recording other vices, "was the hatred

of truth, as well as its maintainers, and the love of falsehood, as well as its forgers; the preference of evil to good; the homage paid to vice instead of virtue; the longing after darkness instead of the Day; the reception of Satan as an Angel of light. Kings were anointed,⁷ with no reference to God, but simply on account of their superior cruelty, and were soon afterwards put to death, without trial, by their anointers; and others, more cruel still, elected in their place. If any one of them chanced to be of milder disposition than his fellows, or to have a greater regard for truth, he was immediately looked upon as the destroyer of his country, and became an object of universal and indiscriminating hatred and violence. Things pleasing and displeasing to God, were esteemed of equal value, or rather, the latter were somewhat the more highly prized of the two. In short, the warning formerly uttered by the prophet against the ancient people of God, might well have been extended to this country. ‘My sons, you have forsaken the law of God, and provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel. . . . The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,’ &c.”⁸

Nor was this general corruption of manners confined to the laity. “The Lord’s very flock, with its shepherds, who ought to be an example to the people at large, was plunged in excesses, and rent asunder by mutual animosities.” From this miserable picture, which is pursued at some length by the historian, it is pleasant to turn to the Martyrologies, proving, as they do, that, even at this dreary time there were “lights shining in a dark place.” The century following upon the final de-

⁷ Hence appears the great antiquity of this practice in Britain.

⁸ *Is. i. 3, 5*; *S. Gildas, de Excid. Brit. § 21.*

parture of St. Germanus, produced the great names of SS. Daniel, David, Dubricius, Theliau, and Paternus, in Wales; St. Kentigern in North Britain; SS. Ursula and her companions, natives of Britain, and Martyrs in Armorica; St. Sophias, Martyr, St. Keyna, Virgin, St. Gundleus, Hermit, his son, St. Cadoc, and master, St. Tathai, St. Dogmael, St. Gildas Albanus, and many others. Indeed, the fifth and sixth centuries may be esteemed the golden age of the Welsh Church, which was at that period both the fruitful mother of Saints, and the vigorous defender of the Faith against heresy. In the earlier part of this century, the Pelagian infection began once more to break out; upon which a Synod was summoned to meet at Brefi in Cardiganshire, under the presidency of St. David, and orthodox decrees were put forth, the record of which, has, however, entirely perished, with all other documents of the time. This synod was convened about the year of our Lord 519.

One of the few circumstances of this period, interesting in an ecclesiastical point of view, the memory of which has survived the wreck of documents, and almost of traditions, consequent upon the Saxon invasion, is the question which arose upon the consecration of St. Kentigern. The proceedings upon this occasion were, in several points, uncanonical. First, the newly consecrated Bishop was under age, having been at the time but twenty-five. Secondly, he was consecrated by a single Bishop; and thirdly, without consent of the Metropolitan. These deviations from the established practice of the Western Church have led some to conclude, that the ancient British Church derived its doctrine and discipline not from Rome, but from the East. Such an opinion, however, as it is certainly at variance with *facts which have already come under our notice*, so does

it gain no support from the case of St. Kentigern. For, surely, the irregularities in his consecration were as little consonant with the rule and practice of the East as of the West; and must be set down, not to the adoption of any particular precedent, but rather to the departure from all precedent, rendered necessary by the very unsettled state of Britain, which presented many obstacles to communication between different parts of the national Church. Hence, as it would seem, the impossibility of obtaining, in sufficient time, either the consent of the Metropolitan, or the co-operation of other Bishops. It is said, that the case of St. Kentigern's consecration was afterwards brought before St. Gregory the Great, who dispensed, under the circumstances, with the canonical forms. About the same time, there seems to have crept into the British Church some peculiarity of practice in the mode of keeping Easter. It does not indeed appear that the Church in this country ever gave in to the faulty observance of the East so far as to keep the Paschal feast on a week-day, but only did not, like the rest of Western Christendom, make a point of avoiding the fourteenth day of the month, even when it fell on a Sunday. Yet at Arles, where three British Bishops were present and again, eleven years afterwards, at Nicæa, where the British Church is also thought to have been represented, the Catholic, as opposed to the Quartodeciman and Judaizing rule, was formally sanctioned, and the British Church thus pledged to follow the Western practice; a pledge which appears, by a letter of the Emperor Constantine, written the same year with the Council of Nicæa, to have been faithfully redeemed.⁹

⁹ Eusebius in Vita Constantini, iii. 19.

The whole question as it relates to Britain is, as Mr. Mr. Alban Butler somewhere observes, no otherwise interesting than as a matter of historical fact. There are no reasons, however, which give it a claim to notice in the present sketch; the light which it seems, in common with the case of St. Kentigern just mentioned, throw upon the state of the British Church at the period under review; and the prominence of the subject in the controversy afterwards maintained between St. Augustine of Canterbury and the British Bishops. The Saxons and Britons were finally brought into agreement with the Catholic rule of Easter by the instrumentality of St. Wilfred in the year 664.¹⁰

¹⁰ Rev. A. Butler, Lives of the Saints. Oct. 12.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRITISH CHURCH.—ITS DEGENERACY AND AFFLICTIONS.

A.D. 448—A.D. 586.

THE course of our narrative now requires us to turn to the barbarous nations which God raised up to punish the wickedness of the ancient Britons, and to become, in due time, the recipients of His converting grace.

The Saxons appear to have been originally Getæ, or Goths, who passed from Sweden into Germany under the conduct of Odin, or Woden, their military chief, afterwards honoured among them as their tutelar divinity. The Angles were probably a tribe of the Cimbrians; and the Jutes, like the Saxons, were derived, as their name imports, from the Getæ. In the second century of the Christian æra, these tribes were obscure and insignificant; but, in the earlier part of the fourth, they had grown into a populous and important nation. The arrival of some Franks on the shores of Batavia first moved them to try their fortunes on the sea; and they had landed several times on the coasts of Britain before the Britons, thus made aware of their bold and enterprising habits, were led to invite their assistance against the Scots and Picts. The result of this ill-considered measure is sufficiently notorious. Illustrating the old fable of the horse, who found a master where he sought and expected a friend, the miserable Britons too soon discovered that they had filled their country

with enemies under the mask of allies. After many years of ineffectual resistance, during which the invaders poured in upon the island in still increasing numbers, the natives were compelled to surrender, or to fly. The greater portion were enslaved to the conquerors; some migrated to the friendly shores of Brittany, where there had been a settlement of Britons since the fourth century; others withdrew into Cornwall; while the remainder, including the principal ecclesiastics, took shelter behind the mountains of Wales, which was evidently at that time the most religious quarter of the island, and thus from sympathy, not less than geographical situation and characteristics, the fittest of all places to afford an asylum to the exiled Church.

When the territory of Britain was finally ceded to the invaders, the see of London was filled by Theonus, and that of York by Thadioc. These prelates, with their flocks, determined upon flight; and accordingly, having gathered together all the sacred vessels they could rescue from the fury of the idolaters, together with many precious relics of Saints, departed, in the year 586, for Wales. There, upon their arrival, they reverently deposited the sacred relics in graves which they had caused to be dug for the purpose. Theonus was the last Archbishop of London; the primacy of the national Church having been afterwards transferred to Canterbury. The successor of Thadioc in the Archbishopric of York, was St. Paulinus, one of the companions of St. Augustine.

That, notwithstanding all the miserable corruption of the British clergy and people, the invaders found much more than the name and shadow of a Church against which to direct their rage, is evident from the Saints, *dwellers in Britain*, or at least natives of it, who adorned

the Church in the sixth century, in the middle of which we hear (besides the Saints more immediately connected with Wales) of SS. Winwaloe, Petroc, and Helier, the two former abbots, respectively, in Brittany and Cornwall, the last a Martyr in Jersey; and, even at the close of it, Brittany seems to have yielded one witness to the power of the Cross in St. Gudwall, or Gurwall, who, before his emigration, was Superior of a religious house of great repute in Devonshire. Moreover, it is plain from the account of St. Bede, that Britain was watered with Martyrs' blood even during the victorious progress of the Saxon arms.¹ "Priests," he says, "were *everywhere* massacred at the altars, and prelates with their flocks, all respect to honour being set at nought, were swept away by fire and sword, without any to give burial to their mangled corpses."²

St. Bede here seems to point to the Psalmist's words:—
 "Deus, venerunt gentes in hæreditatem Tuam; polluerunt templum sanctum Tuum . . . posuerunt morticina servorum Tuorum, escas volatilibus cœli, carnes sanctorum Tuorum bestiis terræ. Effuderunt sanguinem eorum, tanquam aquam in circuitu Jerusalem; et non erat qui sepeliret. Facti sumus opprobrium vicinis nostris, subsannatio et illusio his qui in circuitu nostro sunt."³

And yet, if ever there were a case in which the calamities of a nation wore the appearance of a most righteous judgement upon sin, and in which the chastisements of Almighty God, however terrible, were conspicuously tempered by provisions of mercy, the case of the Saxon conquest of Britain was such. That the visitation was

¹ Vide page 2.

² S. Bede, lib. i. c. 15.

³ Ps. lxxviii. (lxxix.) 1—4.

strictly retributive, is affirmed by both the sainted historians who have described it.⁴ Meanwhile we, who come after, cannot but recognize the hand of Divine Goodness in an appointment, which destroyed one temple, only to raise up, in its place, another, far more beautiful and glorious. England, till after the Saxon invasion, was celebrated rather as the receptacle of new and strange doctrines,⁵ than as the "island of saints;" at least, the holy names which have sunk deepest into the memories, and been most often upon the lips, of posterity, the virgin Kings, and the valiant Archbishops, England's especial "glory," were the fruit, not of the British, but of the English, Church. Would it not seem as if, in the counsels of Divine Providence, that entire repeopling of our island which followed upon the Saxon invasion, had some mysterious bearing upon the future destinies of the Church of this land? The materials of the former House were cast aside as vile and refuse, and a new quarry opened from which were to be fetched stones, rude in appearance, but meeter for the Master's use. To say this, is not to derogate from the all-transforming virtue of Divine Grace, but merely to imply that its operations leave untouched the original distinctions of national as of individual character; eliciting (if it may be said) only a more perfect harmony through the combination of various, though not discordant, elements of sweetness and power. Indeed, in the characteristic features of the Saxon nature, as they have been left on record by a most unsuspecting witness, the historian Tacitus, the Christian eye may perhaps de-

⁴ S. Gildas, § 24; S. Bede, lib. i. c. 14.

⁵ Omnis se lues hæreseos cujusque, insulæ, novi semper aliquid audire gaudenti, et nihil certi firmiter obtinenti, infudit. S. Bede, lib. i. c. 8.

test not a few signs of that abundant promise which was afterwards realized through the mighty Agency which resides in the Christian Church. Deeply interesting and instructive is it to trace, in the dauntless bravery⁶ of those fierce warlike tribes, the seeds of the martyr-spirit ; of reverence for sacred things, in the dread of ceremonial pollution ;⁶ of aptitude for the deep impressions of awe and mystery, in the superstitious estimate of the female sex ;⁷ and, above all, of those lovely graces of virgin sanctity, and chastity in the marriage state, which bloomed nowhere so kindly as in English soil, in the honours paid to continence, and the estimate, for a heathen nation so remarkably strict, of the intent and obligations of the matrimonial bond.⁸ Nay, even in the very vices which prevailed among the German tribes, grounded as they evidently were, less in the desire of base sensual indulgence, than in the love of excitement,⁹ may be discovered the elements of a temper, (natural, rather than simply evil,) which the Catholic Church, with its opportunities of intense devotion, and, as it were, romantic enterprise, its magnificent and diversified apparatus of arresting wonders and soul-entrancing solemnities, is especially ordained by God to address, engage, and sanctify.

⁶ *Scutum reliquisse, præcipuum flagitium, nec aut sacris adesse, aut consilium inire, ignominioso fas.* Tac. de Mor. Germ. vi.

⁷ *Inesse quinetiam feminis sanctum aliquid et providum putant, &c.* *ib.* viii.

⁸ *Severa illic matrimonia ; soli barbarorum singulis uxoribus contenti sunt . . . ne se mulier extra virtutum cogitationes, extraque bellorum casus putet, ipsis incipientis matrimonii auspiciis admonetur, venire se laborum periculorumque sociam, &c.* *ib.* xix.

⁹ *Cibi simplices ; agrestia poma, recens fera, aut lac concretum ; sine apparatu, sine blandimentis, expellunt famem ; adversus sitim non eadem temperantia.* *ib.* xxiv. But their besetting vice was, gaming. cxxiv.

Such, as portrayed by a heathen pen, were some distinctive marks of the character which Divine Grace was afterwards to mould into those various but alike noble and beautiful forms of saintliness, for which the English Church was once proverbial among the nations of Christendom. We are now to speak of the honoured instruments to whom the beginnings of this goodly work were entrusted.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT, THE SPIRITUAL FATHER OF
ENGLAND.

NOTHING, humanly speaking, could have been more gloomy than the religious prospects of Britain, or, as we must now say, England, when the Saxons finally became masters of it. The ancient Britons, with whom alone of all the islanders the light of the Gospel now resided, manifested no disposition whatever to carry it among the Pagan Saxons. Their blameworthy supineness in this matter is distinctly objected to them by St. Bede;¹ and, for all that appears, with the best reason. It is true, indeed, as an historian has observed,² that so heavy a charge ought not to be brought against the Britons without certain allowances. Their relative position with respect to the Saxons, was such as must needs have rendered the attempt at conversion not less unacceptable to its objects than humiliating to their own national prejudices. But it is certain that no difficulties stood in the way of the undertaking, which a truly Apostolic zeal and charity would not have been aided to overcome. From whatever cause, however, whether as the result of internal divisions, or as the baneful fruit of luxury, or as a consequence of the interruption

¹ Inter alia inenarrabilem scelerum facta, hoc addebant, ut nunquam genti Saxonum, sive Anglorum, secum Britanniam incolenti, verbum fidei prædicando committerent. Lib. i. c. 22.

² *Revin*.

of intercourse with the Continent, a spirit of languor had crept over the British Church in general, during the century preceding the final establishment of the Saxon power, to which we are, perhaps, not wrong in attributing the apparent indifference with which its members seem to have regarded the spiritual desolation of their country.

But if the prospect was thus cheerless at home, still more improbable, surely, did it seem, that the arm of help would be extended from any foreign quarter. The great external source to which, in times past, our island had been indebted for religious knowledge, was the Roman Church; whether acting directly for herself, or mediately through her handmaid, the Church of Gaul. But, ever since the earlier part of the fifth century, when the empire relinquished its hold upon Britain, all regular communication between Rome and this country had ceased. Indeed, from that period, Britain, to all appearance, relapsed into the obscurity to which its remote situation and insular form naturally tended. Neither was it from Rome alone that our island, since its assertion of independence, was cut off. It became a little world in itself, the theatre of internal rivalries and struggles, but "seldom connected, either in peace or war, with the nations of the Continent; insomuch that in the copious history of Gregory of Tours we cannot find any traces of hostile or friendly intercourse" (even) "between France and England,"³ till the events which immediately preceded the mission of St. Augustine.

It has often been observed before, that Divine help is then ever readiest when human prospects are darkest;

³ Gibbon.

and surely the present case is to the point of this most true and consoling sentiment. What could have been more contrary to expectation than the means by which the intercourse between England and Rome, thus long suspended, was eventually restored, and restored with all the happier effect, inasmuch as it was to be henceforth a strictly religious intercourse, unfettered by any political ties, and unclouded by the consciousness, or even the memory of any hostile relations? Such, indeed, the connexion between Britain and the *Church* of Rome had ever been; but perhaps it was difficult for the Britons to forget, as it was assuredly undesirable for them to bear in mind, that the power which had interposed to give them true freedom, was locally identified with that which never came before them but as the enemy of their national independence. From this time forth, however, the bond between Rome and England was to become an exclusively Christian one. And, as if to facilitate so blessed an issue, the island itself had been replenished with new inhabitants, and those were now to be brought into intercourse with Rome of a directly and unambiguously spiritual kind, who had never associated, even with her very name, any ideas at variance with that sweet maternal character which, by the mercy of God, she was henceforth to assume towards them.⁴ But we must hasten to a detail of the strange circumstances under which this new connexion between England and the Church of Rome was cemented; and to this end it will be necessary to shift the scene of our narrative from our own island, in which it has hitherto been laid, to that illustrious City from which the frail memorials of earthly pomp and temporal dominion had now departed, to make way for the one *only Dynasty which is without limit and without end*;

the Empire of empires, the substance whereof all other dominions are but the shadows, though itself but the shadow of that better and lasting Kingdom into which it shall one day be absorbed.

We will first speak of St. Gregory, the author of St. Augustine's mission. He was born about the year 540 : his father, Gordianus, was a person of great wealth and senatorial rank, who, in the latter years of his life, withdrew from secular cares, and filled an important office in the Church, that of Regionary, or one of the seven Cardinal Deacons, who were appointed by the Pope to superintend the ecclesiastical districts of the city. His mother was Sylvia, a lady who found her chief pleasure in acts of devotion, and who, for the more undisturbed exercise of prayer and contemplation, built herself a little oratory near the Church of St. Paul. Their son Gregory, that is the Vigilant, (a name given him under an almost prophetic foresight of his future career,) was brought up to the law, in which study he made diligent progress, and by his general attainments, and the excellence of his disposition and conduct, recommended himself to the notice of the emperor Justin the younger, who appointed him prætor, or, as we might now say, Mayor, of Rome. As chief magistrate of the city, he was bound to maintain considerable state, both in his dress and in other appointments; he wore the *trabea*, which was a rich robe of silk adorned with jewels, peculiar to his own office, and that of the consuls. Such splendid trappings, however lawful as accessories to popular consideration and respect, and in no wise to be declined by those whom God calls to posts of earthly dignity, are but little in keeping with the mind of Saints, *who ever desire to shrink from public gaze instead of*

seeming to court it. Nevertheless, these accompaniments of worldly greatness do not furnish, on this account, the less valuable opportunity of self-denial, and even retirement of spirit, little as we might be apt to suppose that they could ever be made serviceable to ends so uncongenial to their nature and intention. In Gregory they did not tend, at all events, to obstruct the progress of the spiritual life ; for we read that, even while in office, he was continually at his devotions in church, or in private, and that he would steal away from the busy scenes of the world, when his other duties admitted of it, or decline more brilliant society for the sake of conversing with devout and learned monks. When he had filled the office of prætor one year, he resolved upon quitting the world, and taking the monastic habit under Valentinus, the second Abbot of the Monastery of St. Andrew, which he had himself built after he came into possession of ample estates upon the death of his father. He entered this monastery at the age of 35, but was soon obliged to obtain a dispensation from all strict fasting on account of ill health. He was attacked by severe fainting fits, arising from weakness of stomach, and this malady seems to have clung to him during the rest of his life. The necessity of taking food at times when the rule of the Church forbade it, was a great trouble to him, more especially in the weeks devoted to the commemoration of our Lord's Adorable Passion. On Easter Eve, the strictest Fast in the whole year, his grief at being precluded from conforming to the general practice was so intense, that he determined upon consulting a monk of great prudence and sanctity, named Eleutherius, in company with whom he prayed for power to "keep the fast at least on that sacred day."

and immediately felt himself so much strengthened, that he was able to observe the rule without any painful consequences.

The time which St. Gregory passed in St. Andrew's Monastery, he ever looked back upon as the happiest of his life. After his elevation to the Popedom, he was apt, in conversation with his friends, to draw comparisons between the cares of his official, and the peacefulness of his monastic, life. "My poor mind," he would say, "recurs from these buffeting and piercing anxieties, to old monastic days, when it was occupied with higher matters, and allowed the passing events of the time to glide away, as it were, below it. So intent was it in holy contemplation, that, though still in the body, it seemed to have already burst the bonds of flesh, and to look even upon death, which almost all esteem a penalty, as but the door of life and the crown of all its labours. Now, on the contrary, from the necessary avocations of the Pastoral charge, it is obliged to undergo not a little of the business of mere seculars; and, after so sweet a vision of its rest, has again to be soiled with the dust of earthly engagements. Thus, I weigh what I bear, and I weigh what I have lost; and what I bear seems the more grievous from reflecting upon what I have sacrificed. For I am now tossed by the waves of a mighty ocean; and my mind, like a ship, is dashed to and fro by the violence of a furious storm; and when I recollect my former life, turning, as it were, my eyes behind, I obtain a glimpse of the shore, and sigh. And, what is worst of all, while I am in the midst of these enormous beating billows, I am hardly able to get a sight of the harbour which I have quitted."⁴

⁴ S. Greg. Præfatio in Dialogos.

It would be very unfair indeed to take a Saint's estimate of himself as the measure of his real proficiency or profitableness. "We may rather conclude," says St. Gregory's biographer, "that, notwithstanding these lowly thoughts of himself, his pastoral occupations had detracted nothing from the sum of his monastic perfection; but rather that, by his labours in the conversion of many, he was making yet greater advances in the perfect way than formerly, when he was in the calmness of a private retreat."⁵

However this may have been, certain it is that the heart of Gregory was never more open to the motions of brotherly love and compassion towards sinners, than at the period when he had the greatest leisure for holy contemplation, and the study of divine books. Indeed, there is no specific against the spirit of a morose and exclusive selfishness more effectual than the habit of communion with God in prayer, and the intent meditation on holy mysteries. It is much intercourse with the world at large, which tends to dry up the springs of brotherly affection. Religious solitude, on the contrary, ever unlocks them and sets them flowing; and the want of active opportunities for their exercise, and the absence of visible objects towards which to direct them, are readily and abundantly supplied from the resources of mental devotion; since what charity can be more availing, or more comprehensive, than that for which Monasteries give such ample scope—intercessory prayer?

The rules, however, of the house to which St. Gregory the Great attached himself were not so strict as to preclude its members from those opportunities of active kindness which are furnished, with whatever draw-

⁵ Vita S. Greg. per Paul. Diac.

backs, to persons whose lot is cast in large cities, and whose duties carry them out into the streets. It was when he was a brother of St. Andrew's, that he chanced one day to pass through the slave-market at Rome, where, among the wretched victims of human cupidity, who met from various parts of the world in that still famous and central, though now fallen, metropolis, the good monk was struck by the appearance of three youths, remarkable for the beauty of their complexions, and especially for their fine auburn hair.

Turning to the person who had charge of them, he asked whence they came, and was answered, "From Britain, where the people in general are as beautiful as they." "And are these people Christians," continued the monk, "or still in Pagan darkness?" "They are not Christians," rejoined the merchant, who had heard something of Christianity both in England and at Rome, "They are still entangled in Pagan errors."⁶ "Alas!" replied the monk, with a deep sigh, "alas! that so much beauty should be the property of the prince of darkness, and these fair forms be the dwelling-places of souls which the Spirit of God has never visited!" Then, after a pause, he continued, "What is the name of their nation?" "They are called Angles," was the reply. Now Gregory was a man of a lively wit, and, though at this time in a sorrowful mood, yet perhaps some bright and happy thoughts had flashed across his mind during the progress of this conversation; moreover, intense feeling of any kind is not unaccustomed to throw itself off in a kind of playfulness, which strikes bystanders as unfeeling and out of place. From whatever cause, Gregory's imagination caught at

⁶ *Paganis laqueis irretiti.* Vita S. Greg. per Paul. Diaconum.

the merchant's answer, and he exclaimed; "Angles, call ye them? Angels, rather; for Angel-like they are, and fit for Angels' company. But to what province of their country do they belong?" "Deira," replied the merchant. "Ay, and from God's ire they shall be snatched," said the monk, again playing upon the answer, "and brought over to the grace of Christ. And the king of their country, how call ye him?" "Ælla," was the reply; upon which, Gregory, eager, perhaps, to bind himself to the purpose of the moment by giving it formal shape and irrevocable publicity, and still finding in the sound of the last word a kind of tuning note to his thoughts, exclaimed, "Meetly is your king called Ælla, for ALLELUIA must be chanted in his dominions."

CHAPTER VII.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT.

GREGORY could not possibly be mistaken in looking upon this incident as a providential direction to him; and he accordingly determined, from that day forward, to give neither "sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids," till he had made his words good by preaching the Gospel, or causing it to be preached, in Pagan England. Full of this purpose, he repaired to the feet of Pope Benedict I., and implored that a mission to England might be forthwith set on foot.¹ When no one seemed ready to undertake it, Gregory himself volunteered to go, should the holy Father see fit to appoint him. No sooner was it rumoured throughout Rome, that Gregory had surrendered himself to the Pope for this foreign service, than multitudes, both of clergy and laity, came forward to implore that his valuable presence might be preserved to them. However, after a time, the entreaties of Gregory prevailed against the voice of the people; the Pope reluctantly gave his consent, and dismissed the monk with a special prayer for the prosperity of his undertaking.

¹ This chronology is adopted from Paul the Deacon, who is followed by William of Malmesbury and Mr. Alban Butler. Cressy puts the meeting of S. Gregory with the English slaves after his return from Constantinople, and in the reign of Pelagius II. John the Deacon, the other ancient biographer of St. Gregory, omits the whole story. In illustration of it, see St. Greg. lib. vi. c. 7. Malmesbury de Reg. lib. 1. c. 3. Gerald. Camb. in Hebr. exp. lib. 1. c. 18. Ina, king of the West Saxons, made a law against this hateful commerce.

Gregory then set out, with some brethren of the Monastery, but in the strictest possible privacy. The fact of his departure, however, by some means got abroad, and all Rome was speedily in commotion. The populace, with whom Gregory was an especial favourite, shared the consternation of his friends at his sudden disappearance, and having met in an immense body, agreed to separate into three parties, so as to waylay the Pope on his progress to St. Peter's. When his Holiness appeared, the vehemence of the multitude exceeded all bounds. Forgetting every customary form of respect, the people rushed towards him in a body, and pressed him with words such as these:—"You have displeased St. Peter. You have ruined Rome. Why did you let Gregory go?" The Pope, it seems, had been, from the first, exceedingly unwilling to grant Gregory's prayer; and this unanimous expression of public opinion furnished him with a pretext for revoking his consent. Messengers were accordingly despatched to recal Gregory. The zealous little troop of missionaries had proceeded three days' journey on their way, and happened to be resting themselves in a field, Gregory, with a book in his hand, and his companions sitting or lying still around him. It is said that, while they were thus reposing, a locust had perched upon Gregory's book, and suggested to his active fancy the idea of some check to the mission.² Accordingly, calling to his companions, he proposed to them to start at once; when, on a sudden, the messengers of the Pope came up, and Gregory was reluctantly compelled to retrace his steps, and, on his arrival at Rome, once more took up his abode in St. Andrew's Monastery.

² "Locusta, quasi loco sta."

This abrupt, and, for all that appeared, final termination to his hopes must have been a grievous disappointment to him: but he had the comfort of knowing that he had done his best, made no false step, and acted from first to last in deference to authority. And he had been long enough a monk to find more pleasure in sacrificing his own will at the command of a superior, than in pursuing fond schemes of his own even in lines along which God's blessing might have seemed likely to go with him. For he knew that nothing short of a voice from Heaven can dispense with the obligation of implicit obedience to the clear voice of authority in matters not plainly sinful. Behold Gregory, then, with wishes crossed and hopes frustrated; from the leader in a glorious enterprise, become once more the pupil in a school of discipline; recalled from the pursuit of daring aims, and the indulgence of transporting visions, to the exercises of penance and the even routine of monastic life.

Not long after his return, Gregory was consecrated one of the seven deacons whose office it was to assist the Pope. The duties of this ministry he discharged, says one of his biographers, with almost angelical diligence and fidelity. He was next sent by Pope Pelagius II., the successor of Benedict, in the capacity of Nuncio, to Constantinople, where, for several years, he represented the Apostolic See at the court of the pious emperor Theodosius. During his stay at Constantinople, where he was compelled to live more in the world than suited his tastes and habits, he was very careful not to break in upon those self-denying courses through which alone he could be rendered proof against the dangers of his new position. He even redeemed time *enough from his public avocations*, to write, at the

suggestion of Leander, Bishop of Seville, who happened to be then at Constantinople, his "Morals," or Commentary on the Book of Job; a work which St. Thomas Aquinas is said to have highly prized as a repository of the soundest principles of Christian ethics. During the same period, St. Gregory was involved in a distressing controversy with Eutychius, the patriarch of Constantinople, who broached some heretical views upon the resurrection of the just. St. Gregory calmly remonstrated with him, and, in the end, the good patriarch was led to retract this error, and, during a fit of illness, made a public avowal, in the emperor's presence, of his submission to the Church in the article of which he had doubted. The error was never afterwards revived. St. Gregory ever stood high in the estimation of the emperor and of the whole imperial family; as a mark of which he was selected to stand godfather to the eldest son of Mauritius, the emperor's son-in-law and successor.

In the year 584, St. Gregory was recalled from Constantinople by Pope Pelagius II., and on his return to Rome again betook himself to his beloved retreat, the Monastery of St. Andrew, of which he was soon after chosen Abbot. At the beginning of the year 590, Rome was visited by a tremendous epidemic, which was the occasion of bringing out St. Gregory's character in a new light. Having assembled the people, he delivered to them a powerful and touching address, and ended by appointing a solemn procession through the streets of the city in seven companies, which were to move, each headed by a priest, from the different churches, chanting *Kyrie eleison* as they walked, and to fall in with one another at St. Mary Major's. So furiously did the disease *rage at this time*, that no less than eighty of the persons

who assisted in this solemnity died in a single hour during the progress of the procession. St. Gregory, meanwhile, was indefatigable in his labours of charity, and continued to assemble and exhort the people as long as the plague lasted.

During all this time St. Gregory had a great trial hanging over him, which, had he allowed himself to dwell upon it, would have been a subject of most painful anxiety. The mention of this will also serve as the explanation of a circumstance which, looking to the known humility and backwardness of the Saint's disposition, may have already occasioned surprise to the reader: his seeming assumption, during the pestilence at Rome, of almost episcopal authority. The fact is, that, among the earliest victims of the disease was Pope Pelagius himself; and the unanimous voice of the clergy, senate, and people, of Rome, had fixed upon Gregory as his successor. It was under no eagerness on Gregory's part to respond to this call, that he came forward as he did at the time of the plague, but merely because there was no other ecclesiastical person who was obviously called to take the lead in a season of great national distress. St. Gregory was thus enabled, *vacante sede*, to gratify, without impropriety, his zealous and charitable inclinations. And perhaps he was not sorry for the opportunity of escaping from a great private care, by making others' feelings his own, and occupying all his time in works of mercy and brotherly kindness. What, then, was this care? In such measure as the reader has learned to sympathize with St. Gregory, he will probably have anticipated it. The Saint himself did not take the same view with persons around him of his own fitness to undertake the government of the Church. *He shrank*, in fact, from the prospect of the Pontifical

dignity, which all Rome was eager to thrust upon him. He saw no escape from the alternative, on the one side, of displeasing those whom he most valued, and seeming cowardly and obstinate besides, and, on the other, of incurring a responsibility, at which he positively shuddered, and which, far from coming recommended to him by the outward circumstances of dignity which accompanied it, was, for that very reason, presented to his mind in a light all the more appalling. St. Gregory did not deceive himself, as so many are apt to do under similar circumstances, by dwelling upon the opportunities of usefulness which attend the possession of place and power, whether in Church or State. If ever there were the man who might have been reasonably determined by considerations of this nature, it was surely he, who had the conversion of England at heart, and who was certain to gain, upon his elevation to the Papedom, the power of carrying out this favourite project. Still Gregory chose, (no doubt under an excess of humility and self-mistrust,) to look upon himself as unfit for the highest station in the Church; and from this view of the question, neither the entreaties of his friends, nor the unanimous wishes of the people, nor any reasons of expediency, could tempt him to swerve. How deeply the Saint valued his monastic calm, and with what apprehension he regarded the prospect of being finally severed from it and thrust into a prominent and conspicuous sphere, may be gathered from many expressions which fell from him, after his elevation, in confidential letters to his friends. The following may suffice out of a great number which might be brought forward. To one who had written him a letter of congratulation on his advancement, he replies :

"I marvel that you have withdrawn your wonted

kindness (in thus congratulating me) when, under colour of the Episcopate, I am in reality brought back into the world; for I am now the slave of earthly cares, as I never remember to have been when a laic. The deep joys of my repose I have lost, and my inward fall is proportioned to my exterior elevation. Reason, then, have I to deplore that I am thrust so far from the face of my Maker. For I was trying to live daily out of the world, and out of the body; to drive far from the eyes of my mind all corporeal phantasies, and with other than the organs of bodily sense to behold the joys which are above. I panted for the face of God, not in words only, but from the very inmost marrow of my heart, and cried, 'My heart hath said to Thee . . . Thy face, O Lord, will I seek.' There was nothing in this world which I coveted, nothing which I feared; I seemed, as it were, upon an eminence, and enjoying almost a fulfilment of the Lord's promise by the mouth of the prophet, 'I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth.' But I have been on a sudden cast down from this height, and am hurried away by the whirlwind of these temptations into the depths of terror and alarm. For, *though about myself I have no fears*, I am full of apprehension for those who are entrusted to my care."³

The last words seem to furnish a clue to the real cause of St. Gregory's misgivings—*anxiety for others*. At any rate, so bent was he upon using all legitimate means against the appointment, that he even dispatched private letters to the Emperor to withhold his confirmation of the election, and to the Patriarch of Constantinople to second his entreaties towards this end. All, however, was to no purpose. The letters were intercepted

³ S. Greg. Ep. lib. i. 5.

by the Governor of Rome, and others sent in their stead of a directly opposite purport. St. Gregory was naturally displeased upon finding that his letters had been suppressed, and, seeing no other course open to him, determined upon flight. Being unable to pass the sentinels at the gates of the city, he prevailed upon some merchants to cover his escape, which he effected by concealing himself in a wicker basket. For three days he lay hid in the neighbourhood of Rome, during which time "prayer was made for him," with fasting, by all the Roman people. At length, having been miraculously discovered, he was brought back into the city, amid the enthusiastic shouts of the populace, and consecrated Pope on the 3rd of September, 590.

We must now return for a while to England, where, as at Rome, the course of events had been most wonderfully overruled, so as to favour the accomplishment of those purposes of mercy towards our country, which it is the object of these pages to commemorate.

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CHAPTER VIII.

KING ETHELBERT AND QUEEN BERTHA.

Two persons, who fill an important place in the history of the conversion of England, are Ethelbert, king of Kent, and afterwards of all England south of the Humber, and his queen, Adilberga, or Bertha. Ethelbert was great-great-grandson of Hengist, who, after the conquest of Britain, established himself in the kingdom of Kent. He began to reign in 561, and had therefore been on the throne thirty-six years, when St. Augustine and his companions arrived in England. During the greater part of this time, he held a very subordinate rank among the kings of the Heptarchy, especially after his failure in an expedition against Ceaulin, the powerful king of Wessex, who finally repulsed him in a great battle at Wimbledon, about the year 569. Being an ambitious prince, and proud of his descent from Hengist, he was still bent on obtaining power over the other kings of the Heptarchy, and, with a view to this object, sought to strengthen himself by a foreign alliance. He accordingly made proposals of marriage to Bertha, daughter of Charibert, king of Paris, and his wife Ingoberga. Charibert was a prince of depraved character, but he died when Bertha was very young; and that princess, under the care of her excellent mother, Ingoberga, and her uncle Chilperic, king of Soissons, *made such progress in holy living, that she afterwards became a real blessing both to her husband, and to the*

whole English nation. Great opposition was raised by Chilperic, Bertha's guardian, to her union with a heathen prince; but such ill-assorted marriages have been sanctioned in various ages of the Church, and not in the very earliest alone, (in which they were of course quite common,) in the hope, no doubt, that they might be blessed to the true "sanctification" of the unbelieving, or heretical, party in the contract. In the case before us, the difficulty was got over upon a stipulation, that the French princess should be allowed the free exercise of her religion in England, and be accompanied by a priest and confessor, so as to enjoy constant opportunities, as well of attending the public services of the Church, as of receiving the benefit of absolution and spiritual direction. To these terms King Ethelbert readily acceded; and in the year 570 his marriage with Bertha was concluded. The clergyman, chosen to accompany the queen to England, was Lethard or Luidhard, Bishop of Senlis, a prelate whose name was afterwards enrolled in the catalogue of English Saints.

Upon the death of Ceaulin, king of Wessex, the most powerful chief of his time, a way was opened for Ethelbert's succession to the first place among the kings of the Heptarchy, which was accordingly yielded to him about 596, the very year in which St. Augustine's mission was undertaken. And here it may be well, with the view of throwing light upon some former passages of this narrative, and of saving digressions in the sequel, to mention the names of the different kings who, at the end of the sixth century, governed the various provinces of the Heptarchy, together with the boundaries of their respective provinces.

1. Ethelbert, king of Kent, whose immediate dominions comprised that county alone, but who, upon the

death of Ceaulin, and the succession of his son Cealric, had obtained an indirect authority over all the other kingdoms, with the single exception of Northumberland.

2. Edilwalch, grandson of Ella, and his successor in the kingdom of the South Saxons, comprehending the counties of Sussex and Surrey.

3. Cealric, the immediate successor of the above-mentioned Ceaulin, king of the West Saxons, and a descendant of Cerdic the founder of that kingdom. He governed the counties of Hants, Berks, Wilts, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, and that part of Cornwall which had not been secured by the Britons.

4. Sebert, king of the East Saxons, whose territory comprised the district which afterwards formed the diocese of London.

5. Ethelfrid, great-grandson of Ida, founder of the kingdom of Northumbria, and the successor to his dominions, consisting of the territory north of the Humber, and south of Edinburgh. It was generally subdivided into Bernicia, which contained Northumberland and Scotland south of Edinburgh; and Deira, which comprised all Yorkshire, and part of Lancashire, Durham, Westmoreland, and Cumberland.

6. Redwald, king of East Anglia, including Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, the Isle of Ely, and part of Bedfordshire.

7. Wibba, son of Crida, king of Mercia, the largest province of the Heptarchy. It consisted of all the counties which have not been already specified, with the exception of those districts which were occupied by the Britons.

One of the first acts of Queen Bertha on her arrival at *Canterbury*, the seat of Æthelbert's government, was to

obtain leave for the celebration of Mass in the little church of St. Martin, to the east of the city, which had been built in the time of the Romans, and to this day bears marks of its extreme antiquity. Here, Luidhard, the queen's chaplain and confessor, as Capgrave relates in his *Life*, was in the practice of offering the holy Sacrifice of the Altar; and "thither," says St. Bede, "the queen repaired for her devotions." So pious and discreet a lady could not but bestow many thoughts upon the sad heathen condition both of her husband and his subjects, and would naturally desire to emulate the example of her holy aunts, Clotilda and Ingundis, who were severally the means of converting their husbands, Clovis king of Soissons, the founder of the French monarchy, and St. Hermenegild, prince of Spain; the one, from Paganism to Christianity, the other from Arianism to the Catholic faith. These precedents in her own family, and that, again, of queen Theodelinda, whose influence had been similarly blessed in Lombardy,¹ had no doubt worked upon the mind of good queen Bertha, who had accordingly the honour, some years after, of being commended by St. Gregory the Great, for the zeal she had long manifested in the cause of the Church.²

In such charitable intentions the queen was powerfully seconded by her confessor, St. Luidhard, whom Capgrave even calls, for his efforts towards the conversion of the English, the "harbinger" of St. Augustine. It seems not unlikely that Luidhard, soon after his arrival in this country, had made some unsuccessful attempts to stir up his brother prelates of France in behalf of the destitute English, since St. Gregory the Great, writing about this time to Theoderic and Theodebert, kings

¹ *S. Greg. Ep. lib. xiv. 12.*

² *Ib. lib. xi. 29.*

of the Franks, severely condemns the supineness of their Church in neglecting to provide for the religious wants of their neighbours, the Anglo-Saxons, whose "earnest longing for the grace of life, had," he continues, "reached his ears."³ This longing is no doubt to be traced to the influence of queen Bertha and her confessor; from one of whom the Pope had probably received his information upon the promising state of England.

It thus appears that the mission of St. Augustine, through the great mercy of Divine Providence, was brought to pass at the very crisis of all others, when matters in England were in the best train for his reception. When St. Gregory first projected the English mission, and had, as we have seen, actually entered upon it, England was torn asunder by internal war; now it was comparatively united under a single head. Then, Ethelbert was one of the most insignificant kings of the Heptarchy; and, if the chronology here followed be correct, was not even married to Bertha. Now, on the contrary, from one of the least, he had become the very chief of the Anglo-Saxon potentates, with authority over the other kings, and through them over the whole English nation. Alone, too, of all the kings of the Heptarchy, he was brought by marriage into immediate contact with the Church; and the delay in the execution of St. Gregory's purpose had allowed time, if not for his union with Bertha, at least for the ripening of her influence over him, and for the continued exercise and display of those endearing qualities of Christian meekness and love, which had not only engaged universal affection towards her own person, but had likewise conciliated both her husband and his subjects towards the

³ *S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 58. vid. inf. p. 84, 5.*

religion upon which her virtues shed so bright a lustre. Nor should it be forgotten, that a very unforeseen and unlikely course of events, had lately placed the supreme, or all but supreme, power over England, in the hands of a prince, not merely predisposed by absolutely singular circumstances towards the reception of the Christian faith, but the seat of whose government was within a few miles of the port at which the missionaries must land, and in whose more immediate dominions they would find themselves as soon as they set foot on English ground. Had some decidedly hostile territory intercepted their progress from the port of their landing to Ethelbert's kingdom, who can say what hindrances might not have presented themselves, or whether they would have been so much as suffered to land at all? Even the kindly offices of the queen sufficed but to procure them bare toleration. What, then, if they had encountered on their arrival nothing but the jealousy and suspicion with which barbarians and heathens would be apt to regard a body of adventurers suddenly making their appearance upon the coast, and demanding entrance into the interior of the country without ostensible reason, or even intelligible pretext? However, it is idle to speculate upon such contingencies, since we know that He who orders all things for the good of His elect, never permits real difficulties to stand in their way. Speculations of this kind are then only pious, when used to aid and strengthen the feelings of devout wonder and thankfulness, which find scope for their exercise in every page of the history of our Lord's *actual* dealings with His Church, and nowhere more fully than in the annals of the Church in England.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. AUGUSTINE ; HIS JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE.

It was not till the sixth year of St. Gregory's Pontificate, that he was permitted to carry into effect his merciful dispositions towards the English nation. It may be inferred, indeed, from the words of one of his biographers,¹ that, two years earlier, he made his choice of the person to whom the conduct of the mission was to be entrusted. Indeed, from the first moment of his elevation to the Popedom, he seems to have kept his heart intently fixed on this great object of his hopes and prayers, which, however, he was restrained from attempting to compass till "all things were ready" for the orderly fulfilment of the work. In a letter to Syagrius, Bishop of Autun, he speaks of the English mission as having been in his thoughts long before it was accomplished.² And the following letter, written about a year before the expedition to England, gives proof of his constant interest in the welfare of our country. It is addressed to Candidus, a Presbyter, who was on his way to take charge of the ecclesiastical patrimony in Gaul.

GREGORY TO CANDIDUS.

"We desire your Affection, to whom has been entrusted, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, the control

¹ *John the Deacon.*

² S. Greg. Ep. lib. ix. 108.

of the patrimony in Gaul, to purchase with the silver pieces you have received, some clothes for the poor, or to apply them towards redeeming English boys, of the age of seventeen or eighteen, with a view to their being placed in monasteries, and brought up to the service of God. In this way, the Gallic money, which is not current in our country, will be usefully laid out in the proper quarter. If, too, you can make anything of the revenues which are reported to have been withdrawn, do so; and you will meet our wishes, by employing these also upon the purchase of clothes for the poor, or, as we have already said, upon the redemption of boys, to be educated in the service of Almighty God. As those, however, whom you will find there will be Pagans, I wish them to be accompanied by a clergyman; for they might chance to fall ill on the road; in which case, should their disease seem likely to prove mortal, it will be his duty to baptize them. Your Affection will see that these our wishes are carried out, and that with all expedition.”³

The Saint's thoughts are still running upon the miserable lot of these poor English slaves, victims, both body and soul, of a cruel and hateful tyranny. Perhaps he contemplated bringing them up, under his own eye, in the schools of religion, with a view to their eventual return to their own country in the capacity of native missionaries. In any case, when they were lodged at Rome, their presence, and the testimony they would bear to the miserable plight of their countrymen, must have acted as a continual stimulant to the compassion and zeal of the holy Father. We have already seen, too, that, from some other quarter, (probably from queen

³ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 7.

Bertha, or her confessor, Bishop Luidhard,) St. Gregory had become cognizant of earnest spiritual cravings which had been awakened in the hearts of a portion, at least, of the Anglo-Saxon nation.

In the selection of persons to undertake the conduct of so momentous an embassy, St. Gregory was naturally drawn towards St. Andrew's monastery, with which, though absent in body, he was never otherwise than intimately present in spirit. He accordingly made choice of certain brethren of the Society,⁴ whose names have been lost, with the exception of four; Augustine, at that time Prior,⁵ Lawrence, Peter, and John. The missionaries received the Apostolical benediction, and "went on their way rejoicing." It was the summer of 596, when they left Rome.

The site of St. Andrew's monastery, a spot so full of interest to Englishmen, is at present occupied by the church and monastery of S. Gregorio. In front of it are three detached chapels, built by St. Gregory the

⁴ St. Bede calls them all "*monachos timentes Dominum.*" (Lib. i. c. 23.)

⁵ He is called by St. Gregory *præpositus*. Ep. lib. ix. 108. The Prior in Benedictine monasteries was next under the Abbot. For an account of his duties, see the Life of St. Stephen Harding, p. 45. For the question of the rule by which St. Andrew's monastery was governed, whether the Benedictine or Equitian, and if the latter, whether essentially different from the Benedictine, or only a modification of it, the reader is referred to Baronius, Ann. (A.D. 581) on the one side, and Mabillon, (Act. Sanct. Bened. vol. i., and Analecta, p. 499, and Annales Ord. S. Bened. vol. i. lib. vi.) who follows Reynerus (Apostolatus Bened. in Anglia) on the other. The point is also examined in the Life of St. Gregory the Great, collected from his writings, and prefixed to the Benedictine edition of his works. A short account of the controversy, with farther references, will be found in a learned note of the Rev. Alban Butler, appended to his *Life of St. Gregory the Great*. (March 12.)

Great himself, and restored by Cardinal Baronius; the first dedicated to God, under the patronage of St. Sylvia, St. Gregory's mother; the second under that of St. Andrew the Apostle; and the third, of St. Barbara. The last of the three contains a statue of St. Gregory, and in it is preserved the table to which the Saint was daily in the practice of inviting, through his sacristan, twelve poor pilgrims. On the portico of the church is an inscription recording, that from that House "went forth the first Apostles of the Anglo-Saxons."⁶

His Holiness the present Pope, St. Gregory's namesake as well as successor, was an inmate of this House till he attained the dignity of Cardinal.

Of St. Augustine's earlier history absolutely nothing is known, but the fact, which in itself speaks volumes, of his intimate connexion with a Society which always occupied so chief a place in the affections and prayers of the great St. Gregory; and of his selection by that holy Pontiff, after years of anxious thought, and watchful observation, as the worthiest person who could be found for the work and ministry of an Apostle.

The missionaries took ship at one of the Italian ports, and landed probably at Marseilles, whence they proceeded on to Aix in Provence. Here they fell in with persons who made disheartening reports of the country towards which they were bending their steps. "It lay," they said, "beyond a sea of difficult navigation; the inhabitants, besides being idolaters, were savages of uncouth manners and barbarous speech; a cruel death would certainly await them on their arrival, if suffered to land at all; but in all likelihood they would never set foot in the country; and even at last, supposing

⁶ *Hand-book of Travellers in Central Italy, 1843. Wiseman's Lectures on the Church.*

other hindrances overcome, what chance had they of getting such a people to listen to them?"

In all this there need have been nothing new and strange to the missionaries; but, in the first glow of their enthusiasm, they had forgotten, as is so often the case, to count all the cost. One obstacle, indeed, to the work had, to all appearance, been fairly overlooked—the difference of language; no insurmountable obstacle, indeed, if we remember that God's arm is not shortened since the days of the Apostles; yet one which it was undoubtedly the part of Christian prudence to anticipate. For miraculous gifts are too precious to be wasted; and besides, miracles are designed to supply, not the omissions of indolence, or the mistakes of imprudence, but the short-comings of man's natural power, when taken at its best and exerted to its utmost. And again; while the faith of the Saints ever disposes them to expect supernatural interference on the whole, their humility discourages them from looking out for it in their own instances; so that none will be less apt to reckon upon the event of its bestowal than those for whose help it is most apt to be bestowed. When the Apostles of our Lord went forth, they provided, it is true, "neither purse nor scrip;" but this was at His special bidding. How acceptable to Him was this work of His servant, St. Gregory, He abundantly testified by the displays of Divine power with which He accompanied it, and the fruits of sanctity with which He finally blessed it. Yet the Saint would by no means rely upon those direct interventions of help (which yet in the end were so bountifully accorded), so as wilfully to neglect any of the ordinary provisions against necessity, or requisites towards success. We shall see, accordingly, *that the check which the enterprise seemed to*

receive at its outset by the occurrence at Aix, had no other effect upon St. Gregory's calm and prepared mind than to put him upon adopting fresh precautions, and especially upon endeavouring to engage the good offices of the Gallican Court and Episcopate in behalf of the disheartened missionaries. Among other steps which he seems to have taken in consequence of the difficulties raised at Aix, was that of procuring French Presbyters to accompany the monks to England, and act as their interpreters with the natives. It may be remarked, in passing, how strikingly all this is illustrative of the difference between true Catholic zeal and even the more amiable, and, in their measure, venerable forms of fanaticism.

The proceedings of the missionaries in France are matter rather of conjecture than of history; but it would appear by the evidence of St. Gregory's Letters, that from Aix they went to the celebrated monastery of Lerins, situated on one of the little islands off the coast which lies between Antibes and Frejus. From this place, Augustine (who, as Prior of St. Andrew's held the chief rank among the missionaries, though without, as yet, any formal authority over his brethren) set sail for Italy to lay the distresses of his companions before St. Gregory with a view to the abandonment of so unpromising an enterprise.

It has, perhaps, been too hastily assumed by some of the biographers of St. Augustine, that he was a party to the misgivings of his companions. One would not, without clear proof, impute even weaknesses to those on whom the Church has set the seal of sanctity; and, in the present case, the supposition that Augustine expressed his own feelings as well as represented those of his companions in supplicating for a recall, seems *more or less gratuitous*. The words of St. Bede do not

necessarily implicate the Saint himself in the doubts and apprehensions of his brethren. After speaking of the alarm excited in the body of missionaries generally, by the adverse reports, he continues: "Without loss of time they send home Augustine (whom Gregory had destined for their Bishop, in the event of their favourable reception in England) to entreat his leave to give up an expedition so full of peril, labour, and uncertainty."

If, as seems most probable, St. Augustine left his companions either at or within reach of the Monastery of Lerins, it may well be supposed that the delay caused by his absence was far more than made up by the opportunities which it gave them of perfecting their as yet immature faith in the midst of monastic quiet and devotion. In a Society of kindred spirit and rule to that in which their own holy resolutions had been formed and blessed, they must have felt like persons breathing their native air after illness. How many sobering, yet stirring recollections must have arisen to calm at once and freshen their spirits! This is an especial boon of the Church, to create, not one, but ten thousand homes for their children. It is pleasant to think that one of those many "abodes of peace" which have sprung out of the monastic institute, was ready to open wide its gates to these tempest-tost and homesick travellers, and that no less an one than the asylum which furnished the solace of St. Vincentius' declining years.⁷

⁷ Fleury, on the other hand, conjectures, that the monks of Lerins were the "maledici homines" * who tried to set the holy missionaries against the expedition to England. As, however, he adds his reason for this conjecture, it may be allowed us without presumption to argue against it. He infers, then, from St. Gregory not commending Augus-

* St. Bede.

When Augustine reached the feet of his master, he did not fail to report, among other and less welcome intelligence, the kind and hospitable reception with which himself and his companions had met at the hands of the Gallican prelates and ecclesiastics, more especially Protasius, Bishop of Aix in Provence, Arigius, Bishop of Marseilles, and Stephen, Abbot of Lerins; and by the letter of which he was, on his return, the bearer from St. Gregory to Stephen, it appears that he had himself, been an eye-witness of the order which reigned in the Society of which Stephen had the direction. The letter is as follows:

GREGORY TO STEPHEN, ABBOT.

"Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this, has rejoiced our heart by the report he brings of your Affection's persevering and most commendable

tine to the care of Stephen, Abbot of Lerins, that he was dissatisfied with the reception previously given to his missionaries in that monastery. But surely St. Gregory's is a letter, not of recommendation, but of acknowledgment. He had no need to ask favours which had already been forthcoming without reserve. There is a like absence of recommendation in the letter to Protasius, Bishop of Aix, by whom also the missionaries had been kindly received on St. Augustine's first visit to France. It is hardly probable that since the monks of Lerins had already (as appears from St. Gregory's letter to the Abbot Stephen) entertained St. Augustine and his companions, the latter would be left by their hosts during the absence of their leader (which must have extended to some weeks at the least) to fare as they could at the public inns; especially when we consider how mindful religious communities have ever been of the promise, "Whoever shall give you to drink a cup of cold water in My name, because you belong to Christ he shall not lose his reward."

[Since writing the above, I observe that Mabillon speaks positively of *St. Augustine's* companions having remained at Lerins during his absence.]

vigilance; and by telling us that the Presbyters, Deacons,⁸ and whole congregation live together as men of one mind. And, since the good regulation of the body depends upon the virtues of the Superior, our prayer is, that Almighty God, may of His great mercy, kindle in you the flame of good works, and guard all those who are committed to your care against every temptation of the Devil's malice; granting them all love towards you, and such a conversation as is well-pleasing in His sight.

"But since the Enemy of mankind desists not from laying snares for our ruin, yea rather labours assiduously to seduce, in some weak part or other, those souls which are pledged to God, we exhort you, dearest brother, to exercise your watchful care without ceasing, and so to guard those committed to you by prayer and anxious forethought, that this roaming wolf may find no opportunity of tearing your flock in pieces. So, when you shall have restored in safety to God the charge which you have received from him, may He, of His grace, bestow upon you the rewards of your labour, and multiply your aspirations after eternal life.

"We have received the spoons and platters⁹ which you have forwarded, and we thank your Charity, for thus shewing your love of the poor, in transmitting necessities for their use."¹

⁸ It thus appears, says the Benedictine editor of St. Gregory, that there were many Clergy in this as in other monasteries.

⁹ Circulos.

¹ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 56. Stephen did not continue through life to justify St. Gregory's good opinion of him. Five years later, we find the Saint writing to Cono, Abbot of Lerins, of the sorrow which his predecessor's (Stephen's) imprudence and remissness had often caused him. (*Ep. lib. xi. 12.*) Hence some would take the letter to Stephen as a mere admonition, which its tenor by no means justi-

The concluding sentence of this letter, though irrelevant to the present purpose, is far from being the least interesting and characteristic portion of it.

St. Gregory wrote at the same time to Protasius, Bishop of Aix in Provence.

“The ardour of your affection to St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, is not only guaranteed by the requirements of your office, but is also evident from the devotion which you actually manifest in the cause of the Church. This we know from the report of Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this letter; and we are proportionately rejoiced at the tokens of your earnestness and zeal for the Truth. Though absent from us in body, you have shown that you are united with us in heart; for you exhibit towards us that brotherly charity which is meet.”

To Arigius, Bishop of Marseilles, St. Gregory wrote nearly in the same terms.

The arguments by which the holy Pontiff sought to restore the confidence of the missionaries, and the measures which he proposed for securing order and unanimity among them, are contained in a letter forwarded to them by the hands of Augustine.²

“TO THE BRETHREN ON THEIR WAY TO ENGLAND.

“Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to his brethren, servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Since it had been better not to enter upon good designs than to think of withdrawing from them when undertaken, meet is it, my dearest sons, that you

fies. The probability is, either that St. Gregory was ignorant of facts, or that Stephen afterwards fell off.

² *S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 51.*

set yourselves with all possible alacrity, to fulfil this good work, which with the Lord's help, you have begun. Suffer not the difficulties of the journey, nor the reports of calumnious men, to shake you in your resolution; but, with all eagerness and fervour, carry through what, at God's suggestion, you have undertaken, knowing that the greater your labours, the more abundant will be the glory of your everlasting reward. Augustine, your Prior, returns to you with our authority to govern you as your Abbot; obey him in all things with lowliness. Be assured that whatever you do in conformity to his directions, will tell to the profit of your souls. May Almighty God shield you with His grace, and grant me to behold the fruit of your exertions in our everlasting country! that so, though I am denied a part in your labours, I may be found the associate of your reward; since, had I my wish, I would labour with you. May God take you, my dearest sons, into His keeping.

"Dated this 23rd day of July, in the fourteenth year of the reign of the most religious Emperor, our lord Mauricius Tiberius Augustus, and the thirteenth from the consulship of the same our lord; and of the Indiction, 14."³

³ The Indiction (fors. ab *indictis* tributis et vectigalibus) was a cycle of fourteen years, said by some to have been instituted by Constantine the Great in 312. There were several of these cycles; the Constantinopolitan, according to which the years of St. Gregory's Pontificate are reckoned, began on the 1st of September. (S. Ambrosii Ep. ad Episcopos Æmilie class. i. 23. Ed. Bened. De Noe et Arcâ, c. 17.) The date of the Indiction, according to the Benedictine Editors of St. Gregory, was not put to the acts of any Council before that of Chalcedon in 451, nor used by any Pope before St. Gregory the Great. It was first used in state papers of France (*Mabillon, de re diplomatica*) at the beginning of cent. 9.

It may, perhaps, be gathered from this letter, that want of discipline was, in some measure, the cause of the troubles which St. Gregory was called upon to heal. Augustine's companions were probably younger than himself. Trained, as they had been, perhaps from boyhood, in a monastery, their minds were peculiarly in danger of being thrown off their balance by disturbing rumours. It was one of St. Benedict's wise regulations, that his monks were not to retail in community the stories which might chance to reach them from without. At all events, so long as these brothers of St. Andrew's were living together under the same roof, their lawful superiors would make it a point of duty to guide and govern their judgment of practical subjects in general. But it is likely enough that, when on their travels, matters fell somewhat into disorder, and that St. Augustine was neither allowed, nor perhaps altogether disposed, to interfere with the course of thought and conversation around him. It is not impossible then, that, while at Rome, he may have asked for ampler powers and a more definite authority. Be this as it may, the entire confidence accorded and claimed for him in St. Gregory's letter to his companions, is a proof that his own equanimity had been fully restored either before, or during, his interview with his master.

And surely if words of man could avail to reinstate these fainting souls in their hope, such must have been the effect of that touching sentence in the holy Father's address, "Had I my wish, I would labour with you." St. Gregory the Great was now drawing towards his sixtieth year; he had reached the zenith of ecclesiastical power, which men miscall greatness; he had his legates in courts, and his officers in provinces; he had many *under him*, but none above him here on earth; he was

chief among Bishops and a Bishop over kings ; throughout the Christian world his wish was motive, and his word, authority ; yet here is St. Gregory the Great willing, nay, eager, had such been his Lord's appointment, to withdraw from privileges so august, and powers so commanding ; to exchange the diadem for the cowl, and the throne for the highway ; for the sympathy of intimates to receive the cold looks of strangers, and the repulses of men in power for the deference of vassals. And St. Gregory the Great, as his history shews, was no random speaker, or hollow professor.

St. Augustine, besides the letter to his companions, was the bearer of others commendatory of himself and his brethren to the kind offices of the prelates and sovereign princes of that part of Gaul through which their road lay. To the Bishops of Tours and Marseilles, the Pope addressed a letter which bears the same date with that to the English Missionaries ;—July 23, A. D. 596.

“ GREGORY TO PELAGIUS BISHOP OF TOURS, AND SERENUS BISHOP OF MARSEILLES, BOTH IN FRANCE. A DUPLICATE.⁴

“ Though with priests full of the charity which God loves, religious men need no recommendation, yet as the present seems a suitable time for writing, we have caused this our communication to be addressed to your Brotherhood, to intimate to you that, under the Divine guidance, and for the benefit of souls, we have appointed the bearer of this, Augustine, servant of God, (of whose affection we are well assured,) in company with others of God's servants, to a distant mission.⁵ Your Holiness

⁴ A paribus.

⁵ *Illuc.* The name of the country to which the missionaries were bound, is apparently avoided as a precaution.

must help him, out of your priestly kindness, and lose no time in affording him such solace as is in your power. And, in order that you may be the rather disposed to give him the benefit of your friendly interest, he has instructions from us to acquaint you precisely⁶ with the occasion of his journey; for, we are satisfied that, when it shall become known to you, you will adapt yourself, with all devotion towards God, to the urgent circumstances which place him in need of your consolation."⁷

St. Gregory writes nearly in the same terms to Virgilius, Archbishop of Arles, and Metropolitan; and to Desiderius and Syagrius, Bishops, respectively, of Vienne and Autun.

Besides these commendatory letters to the Church, the Pope sought to obtain a safe-conduct for his missionaries by means of addresses to the chief civil authorities. Their course lay through the territories of Theodoric and his brother Theodebert, kings of Burgundy and Austrasia,⁸ the former of whom had his seat of government at Chalons, the latter at Rheims; and Augustine was furnished, on his return, with credentials to both of these young princes.

"GREGORY TO THEODERIC AND THEODEBERT, BROTHERS,
KINGS OF THE FRANKS. A DUPLICATE.

"Since Almighty God has adorned your kingdom with orthodoxy of faith, and caused it to be conspicuous

⁶ Subtiliter.

⁷ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 52.

⁸ Theodoric was the second, and Theodebert the elder, son of Chilodebert, to whose dominions they succeeded on the death of their father in 569, the year in which they are thus addressed by St. Gregory. *It would seem from history that the elder of the two was not at this time more than ten years of age. Their dominions were admi*

among other nations, for the purity in which it holds the Christian religion, we have conceived strong grounds of hope that you will wish your subjects to be entirely brought over to the Faith which is the bond of your relation towards them as their lords and governors. Now it has reached us, that the English nation has been led by the mercy of God to an ardent longing for conversion to the faith of Christ, but that the priests of the neighbouring country are negligent, and omit to supply fuel to the flame of their holy desires, by means of such exhortations as they might employ. For this reason it is, that we have taken measures for sending Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this letter (of whose zeal and affection we are well assured), in company with others of God's servants to these parts. And we have also given them instructions to take with them some presbyters of the neighbouring country, with whose assistance they may be able to sound the dispositions of the new people, and help their good intentions, so far as God gives them the power. And, in order that they may prove themselves meet and able for this ministry, we entreat your Excellency, whom we greet with all fatherly affection, to extend to those who bear our commission, the benefit of such countenance as you shall deem to befit them. And, as it is a case in which souls are at stake, may your influence protect and aid them, that so Almighty God, who knows you to give this comfort with a devout heart and a pure zeal in His cause, may take all your proceedings under His care, and lead you safe through earthly power to His Kingdom in heaven."⁹

nistered during their minority by Brunehault (Brunichildis) their grandmother, of whom below.

S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 58.

Augustine was the bearer of another letter, addressed to Brunehault, the queen-regent,¹ which ran as follows.

“GREGORY TO BRUNEHULT, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

“Your Christian Excellency is so well known to us, that we can by no means doubt of your goodness ; but rather hold it as quite unquestionable, that, in the cause of the Faith, you will devotedly and zealously cooperate with us, and supply, in the largest abundance, the consolations which we have reason to expect from a religion so sincere. In this confidence, we greet you out of our fatherly affection, and make known to you, that the English nation, according to reports which have reached us, has a desire, under God’s inspiration, to become Christian, but that the priests of the neighbouring country are wanting in pastoral solicitude towards them. Accordingly, that these souls may be rescued from everlasting perdition, we have undertaken to commission to this charge, Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this (of whose zeal and affection we are well assured), in company with others of God’s servants ; for we are desirous of learning, through them, the disposition of the people, and, with your assistance, of taking means, as far as may be, for their conversion. We have also instructed them that it will be their duty to take with them some presbyters from the neighbouring country. Will your Excellency, then, who is apt to be forward

¹ Brunehault was daughter of Athanagild, king of the Visigoths, and in 566 became the wife of Sigebert, king of Metz. The fruit of this marriage was Childebert, father of the aforementioned Theodebert and Theoderic, for whom Brunehault acted as regent at the time of St. Augustine’s mission. History imputes many foul crimes to this princess, which it is hardly possible to reconcile with St. Gregory’s language towards her.

in all good works, condescend, both in compliance with our request and out of regard to God's fear, to consider him as commended to you in all things; to bestow on him zealously the favour of your protection, and the benefit of your patronage in his labours? And, in order to render your recompense complete, will you furnish him with a safe-conduct on his way to the above-mentioned English people? So may our God, who in this world has adorned you with works well pleasing to Him, grant you both here, and in the place of everlasting rest, to rejoice with his Saints."²

St. Gregory's letters furnish us with a clue to the line of road which the missionaries must have taken on their way through France. Augustine, now fortified in his purpose by his visit to Rome, rejoined his brethren at Lerins, where he delivered his letter to the Abbot Stephen. The missionaries may be supposed to have then proceeded to Aix, and thence to Arles, at both of which cities, they had an introduction to the respective prelates, Pelagius and Virgilius. From Arles, their road lay by Vienne, the Bishop of which was Desiderius (to whom they were also recommended), to Chalons, where queen Brunehault was residing with her son Theoderic king of Burgundy. The queen gave the holy monks a very handsome reception; for which St. Gregory expressed his acknowledgments in a letter of four years' later date.³ They next went to Autun, the see of Syagrius, to whom they carried letters; and then perhaps made a diversion to Rheims, the court of Theodebert, king of Austrasia. They afterwards proceeded by Sens (where they found the Bishop, Palladius, with whom St. Gregory was in habits of corre-

² *S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 59.*

³ *S. Greg. Ep. lib. ix. 11.*

spondence) to Tours, where they had a special recommendation to Pelagius. At Tours, they would not fail to visit the tomb and relics of the great St. Martin. Thence they descended towards the coast, through Anjou, which was the scene, according to St. Augustine's biographer, of several remarkable occurrences. At the town of Cé, near the bridge of that name, the appearance of the missionaries caused a disturbance, which ended in their being expelled from the town, and obliged to pass the night in the open air. In this fray, the women of the place took a principal part; they ran about in a wild disorderly manner, filled the air with frantic shrieks, and even proceeded to acts of violence against the meek and unoffending strangers. One of them, more shameless than the rest, is said to have approached Augustine and menaced his life. The Saint instinctively seized a javelin to protect himself, as if against some wild beast; the javelin sprang from his hand as an arrow from a bow, and fixed itself in the ground three furlongs off. The Saint followed it, and, on plucking it from the earth, a pure and abundant spring of water gushed forth, to the joy of the missionaries, and the confusion of their enemies. It is also added that, during the night, the ground on which the holy monks reposed, was illuminated by a supernatural light; as though God would "shew some token upon them for good, that they who hated them might see it and be ashamed." At the sight of these wonders, the infuriated populace "changed their minds, and said that they were divinities;" at least, they set themselves, when St. Augustine was gone, to build a church in his honour, "which," says Mabillon, "is still to be seen with the spring, and a priory dedicated to *St. Outin* (or Augustine)."

It is added, that the first woman who attempted to enter this church, was smitten dead at the door ; and that none of the females of Aix could afterwards be induced to pass the fatal threshold ; counting the calamity, as well they might, for a judgment upon their impious usage of a Saint beloved of God. Before St. Augustine left Anjou, he is said to have received a visit of consolation from the Bishop of the diocese.

In Anjou, the missionaries would be no great way from the British Channel ; to whose billows they would commit themselves in security, under the happy consciousness of possessing a share in their Lord's benediction ; "*Omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres, aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros, propter Nomen Meum, centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit.*"⁴

⁴ S. Matt. xix. 29.

CHAPTER X.

ST. AUGUSTINE IN THANET.

FEW parts of our country have been more changed by the progress of time than the little Isle of Thanet. It was anciently much larger than now: Gocelin, St. Augustine's biographer, calls it, possibly from want of accurate information, "very large;"¹ Venerable Bede, "considerable;"² and the latter assigns it an extent materially beyond its present acreage.³ Its insular character, too, though still remaining, is much less apparent than in very old times; for the river which now divides it from the coast of Kent, is so inconsiderable as rather to deserve the name of a stream, or even a brook. In the time of St. Bede, this river, though even then degenerated from its original size and bulk, and called, in token of its comparative scantiness, the "Wantsum," or "Deficient Water," was still upwards of a quarter of a mile in breadth. It was, in fact, rather an inlet of the sea than a river, although two rivers, the Stour and the Nethergong, contributed to the main body of water. But the channel derived its chief importance from the sea, which, at high tide, formed itself a passage between the northern and south-western extremities of the island; the Genlade, near Reculver,

¹ Prægrandis.

² Non modica.

³ Sexcentarum familiarum, which is computed at 60,000 acres; whereas, Hasted, at the close of the last century, reckons its extent at 26,500 acres, which agrees with present calculations. Possibly the word "*sexcenti*" is put, according to later usage, for an indefinitely large number.

on the one side, and the port of Richborough (the Rutupium of the Romans) on the other. The whole of this wide channel went, anciently, by the name of the Portus Rutupinus. The usual course for vessels on their way from France to London, was to enter at the port of Richborough, and, proceeding round the Isle of Thanet, to come out at the Genlade, where they would find themselves in the estuary of the Thames. Such, however, as were bound for Kent, deposited their cargo at the little town of Ebbesfleet, which lay on the north-eastern side of Richborough harbour. Ebbesfleet may be seen in maps of the Isle of Thanet; lying between four and five miles on the present road from Ramsgate to Sandwich. It consists at this time but of one or two inconsiderable houses, far enough from the sea to be almost out of sight of it. About two miles from Ramsgate, at Cliffs-end, the appearance of the coast, as is well known, suddenly changes, the precipitous white cliffs terminating in a perfectly level shore. Ebbesfleet, where St. Augustine is believed to have landed, is somewhat farther on, and is now, as we have already said, more than two miles within the island, the sea having, in later times, retreated from its ancient boundary on this side of Thanet, as much as it is reported to have gained on it in the neighbourhood of Reculver, where very old people can remember having played at cricket on ground which has now quite disappeared. Hasted, the historian of Kent, considers that "on the northern and eastern side of the island the sea must have washed away many hundred acres (not to say thousands) if it has encroached for the seven hundred years before *in proportion to its advances in the last one hundred and fifty.* On the south and west parts, however, there

are some hundreds of acres now dry land which were anciently all under water, and a navigable stream, where the sea ebbcd and flowed."⁴ Tracts of low marshy land occupy the place of the ancient harbour of Richborough; and the river Stour, which was formerly lost in the ampler tide of the great Rutupian channel, is now seen languidly working its way by a tortuous course, through the marshes and sandbanks, till it finds an outlet in the sea a little to the east of Sandwich.

It was, probably, in the spring of the year 597, that Augustine and his companions (increased by the addition of the interpreters whom they had taken up in France, to the number of forty persons) first set foot on English ground. The important spot seems to have been known and venerated by our Catholic ancestors; the stone which first received the impression of the feet of those who came to preach the Gospel of peace in our beloved country, having, we are told, been religiously preserved as a precious memento in the Chapel of St. Augustine's Monastery at Canterbury.

The missionaries had no sooner landed, than one or two of their body proceeded, (in company with the French interpreters, whom, by St. Gregory's desire, they had brought over with them,) to Canterbury, where they duly acquainted king Ethelbert with the fact and object of their arrival. Great was the joy with which the good Bertha beheld the dawn of a day which she had long desired to see, and for the gift of which she had breathed many a secret prayer in the little church of St. Martin. He who had been her associate in this delightful hope, the hope of seeing a way opened for the conversion of England, the good Bishop, St. Luidhard,

⁴ *History of Kent*, vol. iv. pp. 291, 292, 294.

had gone to his glory a few months earlier;⁵ not ignorant, probably, before he was taken from the world below, of the approach of the blessed missionaries to England, but still uncertain of the issue of their perilous and protracted journey. Was he not withdrawn in mercy at that critical juncture, to offer, for the objects of his care, and the partners of his zeal, a more confident, more intelligent, more unembarrassed, more prevailing prayer than the hindrances of this dark and sinful state allow; and to take under the shelter of his patronage, as a glorified Saint, those on whom before he could but bestow the far feebler aid of a fellow sinner's sympathy? Such thoughts, at least, however alien to the spirit of modern times, were undoubtedly those in which the unsophisticated mind of queen Bertha found its best solace under the removal from her sight of so trusty a counsellor and friend; a loss which must have pressed heavily upon her at a time when there were none around her "like-minded," and such as would naturally "care for the state" of the poor Anglo-Saxons. At that dreary moment St. Augustine must have seemed to her like an emissary from St. Luidhard, charged with a message of consolation and encouragement.

King Elthelbert gave the deputies a favourable hearing, and instructed them to prepare their master for seeing him at the coast on a future day. In the meantime, he sent orders that the mysterious strangers should be hospitably treated. It was impossible but that Ethelbert, during the years of his affectionate intercourse with Bertha, must have learned to regard the Christian religion with some better feelings than

⁵ *Vid. Gallia Christiana*, vol. x. p. 1382, where he is said to have died in 596, the year before St. Augustine's arrival.

those of mere indifference; though up to this time, and for some months afterwards, he continued to join in the Pagan ceremonies at his private chapel, the little church of St. Pancras, while his queen was attending mass at St. Martin's; unless, indeed, as seems more than probable, the public solemnities of religion had been latterly interrupted by the death of St. Luidhard, and the queen compelled to offer her prayers in the secrecy of her own private apartment.

After some days, king Ethelbert proceeded to the Isle of Thanet, and met St. Augustine, according to tradition, at Richborough. He took his seat in the open air, and summoned the saint into his presence, not wishing, says the historian, to trust himself under the same roof with strangers whom he suspected of magical arts. Even the darkest superstition has its redeeming features, its pious misgivings, and its holier auguries; however, as in this instance, preposterously misplaced. For "they came," proceeds St. Bede, with his usual sweet and touching simplicity, "not furnished with diabolical arts, but endowed with gifts from on high."⁶

No sooner were the king's arrival and summons made known, than the missionaries gathered together their little hoard of Catholic emblems, which were confined to such symbols only as befitted the character, and corresponded to the needs of a wayfaring Church. These were, a tall silver cross,⁷ the accompaniment, from very

⁶ Lib. i. c. 25.

⁷ The crucifix was probably not introduced till more than a century later; it was sanctioned at the Quinisexan Council in 692. In the earliest ages all representations of our Lord on the cross were discountenanced out of regard to the prejudices of heathens, to whom

ancient times, of all solemn religious processions, and a large board, or canvas, on which was painted, in the rude style of the time, a figure of our Blessed Redeemer. Having provided themselves with these sacred badges, so significant of aggression upon the world and triumph over it, they formed into a procession, (which, considering their numbers, must have presented no mean appearance,) and so advanced towards the place of reception. Those who have visited Richborough and the parts adjacent, will be aware how peculiarly favourable to what may be called the *effect* of such a scene are the characteristics of the surrounding country; destitute as it is, almost to barrenness, of trees, and, from its natural situation, a spot which must always have been unpropitious to their growth. The course of centuries, with all its transforming influences, cannot affect the properties of the ocean, nor alter the points of the compass; sea air and east winds must ever work their withering effects upon verdure and foliage; however, in more inland districts, wastes may have taken the place of forests, and pastures now smile where swamps formerly looked chill. Surely Richborough could never have been otherwise than a cold dreary spot. As we stand, then, beside the shattered walls of its old castle, that unpicturesque and legendless ruin, and tread upon its vast cruciform pavement (in which the Catholic imagination would fain trace a memorial of St. Augustine's landing, or interview with Ethelbert, till checked in its flight by some stern and truthful antiquary, assuring us that what looks like the spacious area of a church,

"Christ crucified" was a "stumbling-block." The blessings of redemption were accordingly symbolized under the image of a lamb bearing a cross. Pictures of the Crucifixion then came into use, and ultimately figures carved in wood, &c.

was, in fact, but the upper surface of the vaulting of a Roman granary) the eye may help the mind to form no inaccurate picture of the memorable scene before us. Behold, then, the prince, on whose decision, humanly speaking, the religious destinies of England seem to hang, seated, with his court around him, on such sorry rustic throne as the time and place supplied, to receive the Ambassadors of Peace. The region is so bare of trees and houses, that the eye can catch a sight of the scanty, yet well-marshalled and orderly procession, from the time when it is first on its march, and follow it as it grows into distinctness, and opens into twice twenty spare and way-worn forms, clothed in the dark uniform of the Benedictine order. At their head, preceded by the cross-bearer, is one of statelier mien and more majestic bearing than his fellows; "higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward,"⁸ but withal of sweet though reverend countenance. Louder and louder, yet solemn and subdued when loudest, the notes of a plaintive, monotonous chant,⁹ swell upon the ear; drowned, perhaps, at short intervals, by the heavy dash of the tide, or alternating, (for could Nature wear angry looks and seem to utter chiding words that gracious day?) with its hushed and as if respectful breathings. As the train nears the place of reception, the words of the chant become faintly audible, and disclose a prayer for mercy upon England. Was there not an unseen choir bearing part the while in those solemn tones of supplication? Were there not angelic

⁸ See the description of St. Augustine's person at the end of Gocelin's life. (Bollandists, 26 May.)

⁹ The reformation of the ecclesiastical chant, which is due to St. Gregory the Great, took place shortly before St. Augustine's mission.

assistants at that devout offering, to present it, as incense, before the Mercy-seat on high? Was holy Alban, think you, England's protomartyr, absent from that solemnity, and mute in that chorus of suppliant voices? Or Germanus, her zealous champion, or they who first encountered perils by sea and land to plant the cross in her soil?

At length the procession stopped, and the chant ceased. The king bade the missionaries be seated; and Augustine is said to have addressed him to the following effect:

"Your everlasting peace, O king, and that of your kingdom, is the object we desire to promote in coming hither; we bring you, as we have already made known, tidings of never-ending joy. If you receive them, you will be blessed for ever, both here and in the Kingdom which is without end. The Creator and Redeemer of the world has opened to mankind the Kingdom of Heaven, and of citizens of the earth makes men inhabitants of a celestial city.—For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son for the world, even as that Only-begotten testifies, that all who believe in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life. For with so boundless a love did the same Son of God love the world, His creatures, as not only to become Man among men, but to deign to suffer death for men, even the death of the Cross. For so pleased it His unspeakable clemency to bruise the Devil, not in the majesty of his own Divine Nature, but in the weakness of our flesh, and so to snatch us, the worthy prey of the Evil one, by the unworthy punishment of the Cross, from the jaws of that most wicked prince. Whose Incarnate Deity was manifested by innumerable displays of power, by

the healing of all diseases, and the performance of all virtues. He shewed Himself God and Lord over the sky, stars, earth, sea, and hell. He calmed, by His authority, the winds and the sea: He trod the waves of the sea, as though they had been a solid plain; at length, deigning as Man to die for men, on the third day He rose from the dead as God; and, by His Effulgence, adorned with brighter light the sun, which had been darkened at the death of its Creator. He rose, I say, that He might raise us; He ascended into the Heavens, that He might gather us together there in triumph. From thence He shall come as Judge of all the world, that He may place believers in His Kingdom, and condemn unbelievers for ever. Do not, therefore, most illustrious king, regard us as superstitious, because we have been at pains to come from Rome to your dominions for the sake of your salvation and that of your subjects, and to force upon an unknown people benefits, as it were, against their will. Be assured, most loving king, that we have purposed this, constrained by the necessity of great love. For we long, beyond all the desires and glory of the world, to have as many fellow-citizens with us as we can in the Kingdom of our God; and we strive with all our efforts to prevent those from perishing, who may be advanced to the company of the holy Angels. For this goodwill the loving-kindness of our Christ has everywhere infused, by the inestimable sweetness of His Spirit, into all the preachers of His Truth, that, laying aside the thought of their own necessities, they burn with zeal for the salvation of all nations, and esteem every people as their parents and sons, their brethren and kinsmen; and, embracing all in the single love of God, labour to bring them to everlasting ages of

all happiness and festal joys. Such men as these, standard-bearers of our King, made witnesses of God by numberless miracles, through swords, through fires, through beasts, through every kind of torment and death, have with unconquered courage subdued the world to their Saviour. Long since has Rome, long since has Greece, with the kings and princes of the earth, and isles of the Gentiles, drawn by the invitations of these preachers, with all the world, rejoiced to worship the Lord of kings and to serve Him for ever, by whom and with whom, they may reign eternally. Moved, too, by such love as this, Gregory, the present Father of all Christendom, thirsting most ardently for your salvation, would have come to you, hindered by no fear of punishment or death, had he been able (as he is not) to leave the care of so many souls committed to his charge. And therefore he has sent us in his place to open to you the way of everlasting light and the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven; in which, if despising the idols of devils, you refuse not to enter through Christ, you shall most assuredly reign for ever.”¹

Such was the tenour of the address which Augustine delivered to the king. He spoke it, as St. Bede tells us, “sitting by the king’s command.” Ethelbert’s answer was as follows: “Fair, truly, are the words and promises which you bring me, but they are new to me and of doubtful authority. I cannot, therefore, accept them, to the neglect of those religious observances, to which, in common with the whole English people, I have so long adhered. However, you are foreigners, who have

¹ This discourse is given, from tradition, apparently, or pious conjecture, rather than documentary authority, in Gocalin’s Life.—*Bollandists. May 26.*

come a long way to my country, and, as far as I find myself able to understand the object of your visit, you are come with the desire of imparting to me what you yourselves believe to be true and excellent. We are far, then, from wishing to molest you; rather we would receive you with kindness and hospitality. We shall, accordingly, take measures for supplying you with all necessary articles of food. Neither do we forbid you to preach, and make what converts you can to the faith of your religion."²

King Ethelbert was as good as his word. Upon his return to Canterbury, he gave orders that a suitable house should be prepared for the reception of the missionaries, that a table should be kept for them at his own expense, and that no obstacles should be put in the way of their preaching. In due time St. Augustine and his companions quitted Thanet for Canterbury, and entered the city in the same solemn order which had been observed in approaching the king in Thanet. The tall silver cross was again uplifted, and the sacred banner displayed; and as they passed the little church of St. Martin, they chanted, as in the name of its inhabitants, "Lord, we pray Thee of Thy mercy, take away Thine anger from this city, and from Thy holy house; for we have sinned. Alleluia." The poor idolaters of the place marvelled at the strange sight; curiously staring, now at the sunburnt complexions, mortified aspect, and unwonted garb, of the missionaries; now at the gleaming cross, now at the painted banner. Little did they deem that this meek and peaceful company was, in truth, an army of war-

² S. Bede, lib. i. 25.

riors coming to take possession of their city, and lead themselves captive; little could they recognise, on that banner, the image of their Conqueror, or, in that cross, the instrument of His power. One inmate of the place, at least, there was, who discerned in that lowly procession a troop of dauntless warriors, and whose heart beat high with presages of victory,—queen Bertha.

CHAPTER XI.

ST. AUGUSTINE AT CANTERBURY.

THE foundation was now laid of that goodly work which had occupied so chief a place in the wishes and prayers of the great St. Gregory from the day of his providential encounter with the English slaves in the market-place at Rome. The very prediction which the holy Father had uttered on that occasion had received its literal fulfilment; Alleluia had been chanted in the English dominions; though as yet it was but the "Lord's song in a strange land." Still, the seed was sown, and the light kindled: twelve poor fishermen sufficed to convert the world, and here was little England allotted forty "fishers of men;" few labourers, indeed, for so plentiful a harvest, as men might count of few and many; few, if the prospects of return were to be measured by the degree of physical capability in the workmen, or the amount of known resources for the work; but a supply far more than equal to the occasion, if we take into account the quickening power of holiness, the manifold fruit of self-denial, the intercessions of the Church, and the blessing of St. Peter.

The monks, on their arrival at Canterbury, were lodged by Ethelbert in the part of the city called Stablegate, or "the resting-place," as being the quarter in which strangers were usually accommodated,—a name which it retains to this day. The house, therefore, would be in the present borough of Staplegate, to the

north of the "Archbishop's palace," built by Lanfranc, the ruins of which are still visible. Here St. Augustine and his companions remained till Ethelbert, on his conversion, made over to them his own royal palace, out of which grew the Monastery of Christ Church. Ethelbert's own palace was, therefore, within a stone's throw of the house in which the missionaries were lodged on their arrival, so that the king must have enjoyed constant opportunities of witnessing the devout and holy conversation of the strangers. "They lived," says the historian, "like Apostles; frequent in prayers, watchings, and fastings. They preached the Word of Life to all who were ready to hear it, receiving from their disciples so much only as was necessary for a bare subsistence, and in all things acting in strict conformity with their profession and doctrine. In truth, they seemed to put aside the good things of this world, as property not belonging to them. They bore disappointments and hindrances with a calm and cheerful spirit, and would readily have died, had such been God's will, in defence of the truth they preached." The result may easily be imagined. "Many believed, and were baptized, won over by the simplicity of their blameless lives, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine."³

The church of St. Martin was allotted to the monks for the public celebrations of religion. There they "chanted psalms, prayed, said Mass, preached and baptized." For these "forty's sake," it pleased the Divine Mercy to save the city; conversions followed one another in rapid succession, till at length He who "turneth kings' hearts as the rivers of water," vouchsafed to Ethelbert himself the first motions of His enlightening

³ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 26.

Spirit. We have spoken of prayers, and fastings, and the silent power of holiness, as the main instruments towards this blessed result; but truth to history obliges us to take notice of another and more conspicuous spiritual weapon used by the Providence of God in turning the hearts of the English nation to the obedience of Christ. Those miraculous gifts, which at a somewhat later period were even profusely displayed in this island, had already begun to manifest themselves. St. Bede, accordingly, enumerates, among the reasons which led Ethelbert to embrace the Christian Faith, the "multitude of miracles whereby the truth of the promises was accredited." We give this statement as we find it in the pages of a most trustworthy historian, under a deep sense of the obligation resting upon us to impress, and, if so be, inflict, such solemn and mysterious facts upon the attention of a sceptical age, and especially in a country from which, under the joint and kindred influences of heresy, and the idolatry of wealth, the spirit of child-like faith has well-nigh departed.

The missionaries had now, according to our calculation, been about a quarter of a year at Canterbury; for we suppose them to have landed in the spring, and a few days after to have proceeded to the royal city, destined in the counsels of Divine Providence to become henceforth the central source of religious blessings to England, as it had now for some time been the seat of the court and government. Easter had returned with its glorious fifty days; but not on Saxon England, if we except one favoured spot, had beamed the joys of that happy spring-time of Christendom. In the little church of St. Martin alone had swelled the high notes of Catholic psalmody; and when those soul-stirring words struck on our missionaries' ears, "*Resurrexi, et adhuc tecum*

sum, Alleluia!" were they not cheered in their loneliness by the thought that HE, the Unchangeable amid change, the Same "to-day" in glory as "yesterday" in the grave, and "before yesterday" on the cross, was still and ever at their side?

That was the last Easter-tide which brought not its own appropriate joy to Saxon England. And even then might the eye of faith descry on every side the signs of an approaching spiritual resurrection harmonising with the appearances of nature.

Who that has been at Canterbury, has not visited the church of St. Martin? and who that has visited it with such knowledge of the history of England as most educated persons now possess, can have failed to experience many strange emotions on entering beneath its low portal, and surveying its scanty proportions? After all the changes wrought by time in the actual building,—which, with the exception of a few red Roman bricks still discernible in the eastern exterior wall, has probably quite lost its identity with the original fabric,—and notwithstanding the desolating ravages which Reformers and Puritans have perpetrated in the sacred interior, it is hard not to reflect that here, so runs the tradition, queen Bertha prayed for heathen England; here St. Luidhard and St. Augustine of Canterbury offered the holy Sacrifice of the Altar; and here king Ethelbert, laying aside his earthly crown, and sceptre of temporal sovereignty, was admitted as a little child into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It was on the Feast of Pentecost, June 2nd, A. D. 597, or rather on the Eve of that Feast, that Ethelbert, and his queen, attended by a numerous train of nobles, left their royal palace (which lay a little to the north-west of the present cathedral), and proceeded to the

church of St. Martin, distant the better part of a mile. The rumour of the king's conversion had brought a vast multitude of strangers to the city, not from other parts of Kent only, but even from distant quarters.* On entering the church (which is said to have been richly adorned for the occasion), queen Bertha repaired to her customary place of devotion, the king remaining at the entrance. Then, after a portion of the service has been gone through at the altar, the priest who had there occupied the central position descends and advances towards the Font, which is of course near the door. He is distinguished from the rest no less by the unusual height of his person, than by his richer vestments, and as in loco pontificis, though not as yet himself of episcopal dignity, he is preceded, according to ancient usage, by two attendants with lighted tapers. The ecclesiastic in question is, we need not say, no other than St. Augustine himself. Having reached the Font, he addresses the people in the usual form : " The Lord be with you," and is answered, " And with Thy Spirit." He then prays after this manner : " Almighty and everlasting God, be present at the mysteries of Thy great mercy ; be present at Thy Sacraments ; and send forth the Spirit of adoption to create anew [this] soul begotten to Thee in the laver of Baptism, that so, what is to be wrought by the ministry of our humility, may be accomplished by the effect of Thy power. Through our Lord."

At the conclusion of this prayer, the "Consecration of the Font" is intoned after the manner of the Preface at Mass. This ended, the following prayer is chanted : " O God, who, by Thine invisible power, dost work, after a wondrous manner, the effect of Thy Sacraments ;

* Gocelin in Bolland.

we acknowledge ourselves unworthy to perform Thy holy mysteries ; yet forsake not, we beseech Thee, the gifts of Thy grace, and incline towards our supplications the ears of Thy pity. O God, whose Spirit moved on the face of the waters at the creation of the world, grant that the nature of this water may receive the virtue of sanctification. O God, who didst by the water of the deluge purge away the sins of a guilty world, signifying thereby the grace of Regeneration, so that in the mystery of one and the same element might be shewn forth both the end of vices and the beginning of virtues ; look, O Lord, upon the face of Thy Church, and multiply in it Thy regenerations ; Thou, who by the torrent of Thine overflowing grace dost make glad Thy City, and open the fountain of Baptism for the renewing of all the nations of the earth, that by the power of Thy Majesty they may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace of Thine Only-begotten.

Here the officiating priest makes the Sign of the Cross upon the water, and adds :

“ May He, by the secret admixture of His light, render fruitful this water prepared for the regeneration of men ; that, being endued with sanctification, a heavenly offspring may spring into newness of life from the immaculate womb of the Divine Font. And may Grace, as a mother, bring forth all into a common infancy, how different soever in sex or age. Depart hence, at God’s bidding, every unclean spirit ; depart every wickedness of diabolical craft. May there be here no evil admixture ; no treachery to circumvent, no secret poison to insinuate itself, no defilement to corrupt and destroy. May this creature [of water] be holy and innocent, free from every approach of the Enemy, and purged by the departure of *every vicious influence* ; may it be a fountain of Life,

a stream of Regeneration, a wave of purification, that all they who are to be washed in this laver of health, may obtain, by the operation in them of the Holy Spirit, the grace of a perfect cleansing.

“Wherefore ✠ I bless thee, creature of water, ✠ in the name of the living ✠ God, of that holy God, who, at the creation of the world by His Word, who was in the beginning, separated thee from the dry land; whose Spirit moved upon thee, who bade thee flow from Paradise and water the whole of the earth by four streams; who, when thou wert bitter in the desert, poured sweetness into thee, and made thee palatable, and who commanded thee to flow from a rock to refresh His thirsting people. I bless ✠ thee also in the Name of Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who, at Cana in Galilee, converted thee by a wonderful miracle of His power into wine; who walked upon thee with His feet, and was baptized in thee by John in the Jordan. Who gave thee forth together with blood out of His side, and commanded His disciples to baptize believers in thee, saying, ‘Go, teach all men, baptizing them in the Name, &c.’”

Here the priest changes his voice into the tone of reading.

“Do Thou, O God, be present in mercy with us who obey Thy commandments; graciously breathe upon this element, bless this pure water with the breath of Thy mouth, that, besides that natural power with which it cleanses our bodies, it may also become efficacious to the purifying of the soul.”

Hereupon the two taper-bearers withdraw into the sacristy. Then, breathing three times into the water, he says:

“May the virtue of Thy Spirit descend, O Lord,

into the fulness of this Font, and make the whole of this water fruitful with the power of Regeneration. May the stains of all sin be here blotted out. May that nature which was formed after Thy image, and which is now reformed in honour of its first beginning, be cleansed from all defilement of the old man; that they who receive this Sacrament of Regeneration may be born anew into the infancy of true innocence; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who will come to judge the quick and dead, and the world by fire."

Then, taking the golden vessel with the chrism, he pours the chrism into the font in the manner of a cross, and parts the water with his hand.

Then the priest, leading the candidate to the water and holding him in it, demands, "What is thy name?" And then rehearses to him the Articles of the Creed; at the end of which the candidate answers, "I believe." He proceeds, "Wilt thou be baptized?"—Answer, "I will." Then he baptizes him in the customary form.

On the baptized coming out of the font, he is presented to one of the presbyters, who makes on his forehead with the chrism the sign of the cross, adding, "May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath regenerated thee with water and with the Holy Spirit, and who hath given thee remission of all thy sins, Himself anoint thee with the chrism of salvation unto life eternal. *Ry. Amen.*"

At this point in the service the king would have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, had St. Augustine been competent at that time to administer it. As no bishop, however, was present, we may conclude that a Litany was then said at the font, while the *principal priest* took his place at the altar. Then may have *come the prayer* specially appointed for the Vigil of

Pentecost, "post Ascensum Fontis." "Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the brightness of Thy glory may shine forth upon us, and the light of Thy Light confirm by the illumination of the Holy Spirit the hearts of those who have been regenerated by Thy grace through our Lord."

Previously to this prayer, the church had been illuminated in preparation for the Mass which was to follow.

Such was the Form of Baptism used in the time of St. Gregory the Great, according to the Ritual of the Church, as it had been recently set in order by that Pontiff. We have here given it entire, so as to enable the reader to make himself present at a solemnity, the like to which, in interest and importance, has not often occurred in the annals of our country. It should be observed, however, that, either the whole, or but a part, of this Service, would be used on the occasion in question, according to circumstances of which we are not at this time cognizant. Thus it is not unlikely that the earlier portion of the Office, as it has been now set forth, may have been used, not at Ethelbert's baptism, which was solemnized on Witsun-eve, but on the Holy Saturday before, when, perhaps, the water was consecrated in anticipation of the probable conversions. It is also next to certain that many other baptisms took place at the same time with the king's; for, on the one hand, we know from St. Bede, that Ethelbert's was but one of a number of conversions which followed rapidly upon the preaching of the missionaries; and, on the other, if these conversions took place between Easter and Pentecost (which were the two great seasons for baptism), the actual admission of the converts into the Church would be deferred to the latter

period, and the interval would be occupied in the preliminary course of catechetical instruction. We have also seen that other changes in the service were rendered necessary by the want of a bishop. This need, however, was no long time after supplied. Within five months of Ethelbert's baptism, St. Augustine was on his way back to France, where he obtained consecration to the English Archiepiscopate at the hands of Virgilius, Archbishop of Arles and Metropolitan (who had received a mandate from the Pope to that effect),⁵ assisted by other prelates of France. This was on the 16th of November 597, after the commencement of the Feast of Sunday the 17th. Immediately upon his consecration, St. Augustine returned to Canterbury, where he was received with great joy by the king and people, and solemnly inaugurated as Archbishop of that See.

During the five months which passed between the baptism of Ethelbert and St. Augustine's visit to Arles, our Lord had made daily additions to His Church in England. The effect of the king's conversion was, as might have been expected, quite electrical. The people, animated by the example of their sovereign, flocked in multitudes to hear the Word of God, not, however, by constraint, but willingly; for Ethelbert peremptorily refused to employ any kind of compulsion in bringing over his subjects to the Christian Faith, having learned, says St. Bede, a far different doctrine from his new masters. As many as were prepared of their own free choice to take Christ's easy yoke upon them, the king received most joyfully and lovingly; accounting them, says the historian, no longer as his

⁵ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 27.

subjects on earth, but rather as his fellow-citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁶

So mightily did the word of God grow and prevail, even during the first few months of the missionaries' stay in England, and while as yet their ministrations were confined to a single city, that, on the Christmas-day of the year in which they landed, no less than ten thousand of the English received the grace of Life. Oh, what delight did these tidings bring to the heart of the good St. Gregory ! It so happened that the holy Father laboured that year under a more than usual pressure of bodily illness ; but God, who is wont to send His Saints two joys for one sorrow, was pleased to refresh the spirit of this afflicted servant with a double consolation at one and the same time. His friend Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria, had written to acquaint him with the prosperous condition of that Church, and he answers by telling him of the recent news from England.

" Full well do I know that, in all your good deeds, you deeply sympathize with the joy of others. I will repay, then, your favour, and reply to your tidings by others not very dissimilar. The English, a people shut up in a little corner of the world, have been up to this time unbelievers, nay, worshippers of stocks and stones. And now, by the help of your prayers, it has pleased God to put into my mind to send among them as a preacher, Augustine, one of the brethren of my monastery. He by my authority⁷ has been consecrated bishop by the bishops of Germany,⁸ and by their assistance has been brought to the afore-mentioned nation, which

⁶ S. Bede, lib. i. 26.

⁷ *Datâ à me licentiâ.*

⁸ *The Franks were often called Germans, as being of common origin.*

is truly the very end of the world. And news has just reached me of his well-being and wonderful deeds; that either he, or those who were sent with him, have so shone out by the gift of miracles among this people, that they seem quite like Apostles in the signs they have wrought. And on the Feast of our Lord's Nativity, in this first year of the Indiction, as I understand from the same our brother and fellow-bishop, more than ten thousand English were baptized. I have mentioned these facts that you may know what your prayers have wrought at the farthest extremity of the world, while you are talking to me about the people of Alexandria. While your holy doings are made manifest in the place where you are, the fruit of your prayers is apparent in places where you are not."⁹

The question may be asked, Why did St. Augustine go so far as Arles to be consecrated? The answer to this question may be obtained from the letters of St. Gregory the Great, and besides its interest in this place, it throws valuable light upon the ancient prerogatives of the See of St. Peter. The Archbishop of Arles had a precedence among the bishops of France, and was at this time also vicar of the Holy See. St. Gregory speaks, in his reply to St. Augustine's ninth Question upon the English Church, of the Pall as a privilege of the See of Arles in the times of his predecessors.¹ In days, then, which so early as the sixth century could be described as ancient,² the Church of Rome was what may be called the fountain of honour to Western Christendom. In another of St. Gregory's letters, we find him constituting this same Virgilius, through whom the Apostolical succession was transmitted to the English Church,

⁹ *S. Greg. lib. viii. Ep. 30.*

¹ *Lib. xi. Ep. 64.*

² *Antiquis prædecessorum meorum temporibus.*

his vicar throughout the dominions of the French king
The following are the terms in which he conveys these
prerogatives.

“Since, in compliance with ancient custom, you have requested of me the use of the Pall, and the vicariate of the Apostolic See, far be it from me to suspect you of seeking mere transitory power, or mere outward ornament. It is evident to all from what quarter that Faith is derived, which prevails in the regions of Gaul: when your Brotherhood comes to the Apostolic See for a privilege which that See has always been accustomed to grant, what else is it than a dutiful child having recourse to its mother’s breast for all good things! Most readily, therefore, do we grant your petition, that we may not appear to defraud you of any part of that honour which is your due, nor to treat with disrespect the prayer of Childebert, our right noble son in the Faith. But, believe me, it is a matter requiring all your attention, that your diligence and watchfulness over others should keep pace with your advancement in honour; that the excellence of your life should become manifest to those who depend upon you for your example; and that your Brotherhood should never seek your own in the honours which through favour are conferred upon you, but the gains of your heavenly country. For you know what the blessed Apostle says in sorrow of heart; ‘All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.’ Under God’s guidance, therefore, and according to ancient usage, we entrust your Brotherhood with the power of representing us in all the Churches which are comprehended in the dominions of our right noble son, Childebert; reserving to the different Metropolitans such *privileges as belong to them of immemorial right.* We

have also transmitted the Pall, which your Brotherhood is to use in church at the celebration of Mass only. Should any Bishop wish to go to a distance, it will not be lawful for him to pass into other dioceses without authority from your Holiness. Should any question of the Faith, or other grave matter, arise among the Bishops, let it be discussed and determined in an assembly of twelve of their number. If it cannot be thus settled, let the rights of the question be discussed, and the decision referred to me. God Almighty take you into His keeping, and grant your new honours may turn to the profit of your soul ! ”³

³ Lib. v. Ep. 58.

CHAPTER XII.

MUNIFICENCE OF ETHELBERT.—FIRST ANGLO-SAXON
CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES.

It has before now been observed, and indeed will hardly be disputed, than the impression which Scripture gives of kingly power is, on the whole, that rather of an antagonist, than an ally, of God's Church. Kings and queens have, no doubt, a special and exalted place assigned them in the household of the Faith ; but, since they cannot properly rise, except through humility, nor rule, except by submission, it is no wonder that, as a matter of fact, they have so rarely been seen to occupy it in a becoming manner. Considering how deeply the love of pre-eminence is ingrained in unregenerate human nature, and how thickly the rich and great are beset on every side with the temptations to a sin from which not even the lowest stations are exempt, it is no proof of any especial ungodliness in those who are called to the high places of the earth, that there should not have been more among them to earn the crown of sanctity amid the perils of a throne ; rather it is a witness to the sovereign and all-subduing power of Divine grace that there should have been so many. Our Lord's very birth gave occasion to the kingly character to manifest itself in those two extreme and opposite shapes which it has ever since been apt to assume, or to which it has, at all events, continually tended, in its bearings *towards our Lord, that is to say, towards His Holy Ca-*

tholic Church ; the shape of rivalry, jealousy, and hatred, as portrayed in Herod the Great, and that of devout reverence and implicit submission, as exemplified in the Magians. Herod seeking the life of the Divine Infant, and the wise men of the East prostrate at His feet and offering Him of their best, were the types and the predecessors of two several classes of sovereign rulers, whom Prophecy distinctly foreshewed, and History has no less distinctly exhibited ; those, on the one hand, who have " taken counsel against the Lord and against His Christ ;" and those, on the other, who have " come bending " to the footstool of the King of kings, and " ministered " to the glory of His earthly dwelling-place. And well, indeed, had it been for the Church, were there not also a third course which kingly power has been apt to take with respect to her, midway between avowed hostility and implicit submission,—the patronizing and conciliatory line, such as the great pursue towards powerful inferiors, or the politic towards useful auxiliaries. Truly, the Church, when staunch to her principles, recognizes no patrons of this world. She is the dispenser of patronage, not the object of it. She gives patrons to others ; not placing herself under the protection of kings, who often, with flattery on their tongues, cherish guile in their hearts ; but rather distributing the nations of the world under the high and beneficent tutelage of her own glorified Saints. And, as she recognizes no patrons among the great, so courts she no allies among the powerful. For alliances are founded on the principle of mutual concession ; whereas the world has every thing to gain from the Church, and nothing to give in return, which the Church does not account rather an encumbrance *than a boon*. In short, the Church knows of no *relation towards herself* but that of the loyal subject and

the loving child ; and where men are not content to defer to her as a Queen, and cling to her as a Mother, far better is it for her, and not much worse for themselves, that they should take the side of her declared enemies ; be "cold," rather than "lukewarm ;" for decision of purpose, and consistency of action, even on the wrong side, are ever both more respectable, and more hopeful, than middle courses and incompatible allegiances.

That especial temper of self-renouncing devotion, and chivalrous homage to the Catholic Church, which admits of such splendid illustration from the pages of Anglo-Saxon history appears to have been with Ethelbert quite a matter of Christian instinct. From the moment of his baptism it never seems to have even crossed his mind that he was to regard the Authoress of his birth into the Kingdom of Heaven otherwise than as a Parent, whose bounties to him no gifts could repay, and whose claims upon him no devotion could express. His great aim seems to have been, not to engage the affections of his subjects towards himself as an object of ultimate loyalty, but to unite them with himself in common loyalty to the Church. Accordingly, when St. Augustine returned with episcopal powers from France, his royal disciple seems to have been animated but by one wish—that of placing, not his house only, but his city, and even his kingdom, at the Saint's command. That very kingdom which, in days of old, he had eagerly sought, and hardly won, he now hastens to deliver over to a body of men who in the eyes of the world must have seemed no better than mere adventurers and fanatics. All which we hear of king Ethelbert, even before his conversion, seems to prove that he was earnest and conscientious, as a heathen, according to his opportunities ; and this is ever *the true road to brighter light and fuller grace.* N

doubt, his union with Bertha had been a great blessing to him ; yet her influence seems rather to have leavened his mind, than wholly formed it. In his youth, he was actuated by motives of ambition ; but, considering the fearful extent to which this sin prevails among Christians, nay, and is even countenanced and vindicated by them, it would indeed be extravagant to make it a severe ground of charge against a heathen, though of course a sin it is, whether in heathen or Christian. But from more debasing vices Ethelbert, as far as we know, was free. He seems to have been a true Saxon, as Saxons were when they came fresh from their native air, and before they had lost their indigenous virtues through the effect of luxurious habits. He was brave, though as yet he lacked a suitable cause in which to exercise his valour ; and, for all that appears, he was temperate, like a true soldier as he was, though he “ did it for a corruptible crown.” Moreover, it is rather prominently brought before us in history, that he was constant at his devotions ; and could there, under the circumstances, have been better materials to form the saintly heart withal ? Once more, his behaviour towards the holy missionaries from the moment of their arrival was such as could not have been exceeded for kindness, generosity, and discretion. Had he been a self-willed and narrow-hearted prince,—nay, had he been otherwise than a very truth-loving and noble-minded one,—he might quite fairly and reasonably have forbid them his country, as foreigners demanding entrance upon an inadmissible pretext. Yet he received them kindly, treated them hospitably, and gave a patient and candid hearing to the message which they brought with them. Nor was this the indifference of a politician, thinking all religions equally true *or* equally false ; for, even while evidently interested in

the tidings which Augustine announced to him, Æthelbert, as we have seen, made a discreet and conscientious reserve in favour of the religion of his country, which he was not prepared at once to give up. Yet did he not cling pertinaciously to a system, which, being essentially false, could not possibly have found its answer in the conscience of a good man. "Bigotry" is a much abused word; but we must not be led by the popular abuse of the term to forget that the temper exists which that term in its true sense expresses, and a very evil temper it is. We do not hesitate then to say, in a phrase which has an ill-sound but a legitimate use, that king Æthelbert was "no bigot;" meaning by that phrase, not that he would have shrunk from fencing the true Faith round with anathemas against heresy (which is piety, not bigotry), but that he did not suffer his attachment to a false religion (to which, nevertheless, as the best that had come before him, and as incomparably better than unbelief, he was rightly attached) to prejudice his reception of the true.

Æthelbert received St. Augustine, on his return from Arles, as a king should receive an archbishop, and a disciple, his spiritual father. The welcome is described as having been at once truly magnificent and most hearty. When the first greetings were over, the king announced his intention of surrendering his palace at Canterbury for the use of the monks, and of retiring, himself, to Reculver. The King's palace, as we have already said, was not far from the house in Stablegate which had been appropriated to the missionaries on their first arrival, and lay, probably, between what was afterwards the site of the Archbishop's palace, and the cathedral. The ruins, or at least the vestiges, of the *ancient archiepiscopal residence*, are still to be seen

including the remains of the study from which St. Thomas passed to the cathedral on the memorable 29th of December, when he received the crown of martyrdom. But the reader must not confound this building (which is not older than Lanfranc's age) with the palace of king Ethelbert. This latter, from the time of its passing into the hands of St. Augustine, ceased to be a palace, and became a monastery. As such, it remained till the archiepiscopate of Lanfranc, who first erected it into a dwelling-house for himself.

Imagine a royal personage now-a-days giving up his principal palace to a body of monks, and leaving them, as it were, to represent him at the seat of his court and government! We are not criticising this procedure, but merely drawing attention to it as a most remarkable phenomenon. What are called "safe" men would probably consider the act as one of downright madness; but this alone does not prove it such, for Festus counted St. Paul as a madman; nay, even of our Blessed Lord there were those who said, "He is beside Himself." In one point of view, at least, the posture of ecclesiastical affairs in England, at the time of which we write is not a little singular; as illustrating, namely, the words of our Lord, which have been chosen as the motto of this series of Lives; "The meek shall inherit the earth." A year ago, and this mission, now so prosperous and triumphant, was on the point of being abandoned, in consequence of the apparent failure of all human resources; and here are those way-worn and disheartened travellers housed in the very palace of the king of England, and that king become a voluntary exile from his home and from his court, as desiring only that Christ should be magnified in his stead. Let all such as are inclined to doubt if

St. Augustine's path were indeed illustrated by miracles consider well with themselves, whether (as has been said of the original dissemination of Christianity) any miracle which they are asked to believe is so wonderful as would be the fact of such a result having been brought to pass without miracle.

But, at any rate, it will be said, that king Ethelbert, in retiring from Canterbury, was guilty of quitting his post of duty, and must surely have degraded himself in the eyes of his subjects. We shall find, however, from the sequel, that the latter years of his reign were, at all events, no less prosperous than the former, even as respected the temporal interests of his kingdom ; though these were not immediately in his eye when he thought fit to adopt the strange line of policy upon which we are commenting. England does not seem to have suffered in any way from the counsels upon which Ethelbert appears to have leant in the latter years of his life. For kings, no less than private men, and nations, no less than the individuals who compose them, have an undoubted share in the promise, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Near Ethelbert's palace there is said to have been a church, which had been built by Christians as early as the days of the Romans. St. Martin's being generally mentioned as the only ecclesiastical building in Canterbury which, previously to the arrival of St. Augustine, the Christian queen had succeeded in reclaiming from heathen uses, we are to conclude that this church must have been given up, along with the rest, to the service of idolatry. But Ethelbert, when he resigned his palace to St. Augustine, included it in the donation, and *eagerly seconded the measures which the Archbishop*

forthwith proceeded to take for its purification, reparation, and enlargement. Such were the first beginnings of the Metropolitan Church of Christ at Canterbury. Of the original fabric (which fell a victim to the fury of the Danes) neither trace nor memorial exists; excepting the tradition of a special providence vouchsafed at the prayer of Archbishop Odo, by which, while roofing, it was preserved from the effects of weather at a peculiarly tempestuous season. The Cathedral was rebuilt in the earlier part of the eleventh century by Archbishop Agelnoth, but was again miserably reduced by fire and dilapidations; so that Archbishop Lanfranc had to rebuild it almost from the first, a work which he completed in little more than seven years, and dedicated it anew, as some say, to the honour of the Ever-blessed Trinity.

Canterbury Cathedral, then, was originally one of the cluster of buildings which formed the Monastery of Christ-Church. "England," says Reyner, "from its first reception of the Faith, has had two kinds of monasteries: the one, cloistral; the other, cathedral. Those were called Cloistral, which were governed by an abbot, or where there was no abbot, by a prior. Those were Cathedral where the Bishop was Abbot, and the Convent was the Chapter of the Cathedral church; and so the monks were Cathedral canons, performing all those offices which secular canons were accustomed to perform in secular cathedrals."⁴

Thus Christ-church was a Cathedral monastery, and preserved its monastic character till the change of reli-

⁴ De Apostol. Bened. in Angliâ, Tract. i. sect. i. § 17. Upon this Mr. Somner remarks (History of Canterbury, p. 83. Ed. 1703), "I do not remember that in Cathedral monasteries the bishop was ever *reputed abbot*, but the prior, who was in the place of abbot, chief over the monks. And the Capitular acts did run alike in the same form

gion in the 16th century.⁵ St. Augustine became at once Archbishop of Canterbury, and Abbot of Christ-Church; and his companions, canons of the Cathedral, and brethren of the Monastery.

St. Gregory appears, from a letter to St. Augustine of several years' later date, to have contemplated fixing the English primacy at London, which had been its seat in the time of the Britons. But several circumstances united in pointing out Canterbury as its more natural and appropriate position. There the Gospel had been first preached in England. There was the central seat of Ethelbert's government; whereas London belonged not to Ethelbert, but to his nephew Sebert. And the rank which the kingdom of Kent had in Ethelbert's reign come to hold among the provinces of the heptarchy would be a further reason for selecting Canterbury as the Ecclesiastical metropolis of England. The transfer of the primacy from London to Canterbury was expressly confirmed by the subsequent pontiffs, Boniface and Honorius; of whom the former, addressing St. Justus, successor to St. Augustine in the see of Canterbury, writes, "We confirm and command that the metropolitical see of all Britain be for ever after in the city of Canterbury; and we make a perpetual and unchangeable decree, that all provinces of the kingdom of England be for ever subject to the metropolitical church of that place." And Honorius writes, "We command all the churches and provinces of England to be subject to

as well in Cathedral as in Cloistral monasteries,—Abbas et Capitulum, Prior et Capitulum.

⁵ The other Cathedral monasteries which were despoiled at the same period were Durham, Winchester, Ely, Norwich, Worcester, Bath, Coventry, and Rochester; at York, London, and Salisbury, the *capitular bodies* had been previously secularized.—Dugd. Monastic.

your jurisdiction ; and that the metropolitical see and archiepiscopal dignity, and the primacy of all the churches of England, be fixed and remain in Canterbury, and never be transferred through any kind of evil persuasion by any one to any other place." And this decision was afterwards adopted 'in honour of St. Augustine by a council of the English nation ; for, according to Malmesbury, Kenulphus king of Mercia wrote to Pope Leo III. " Because Augustine, of blessed memory, who, in the time of Pope Gregory, preached the word of God to the English nation, and presided over the Saxon churches, died in the same city, and his body was buried in the church which his successor Laurentius dedicated to St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, it seemed good to all the wise men of our nation, that the metropolitical dignity should be fixed in that city where resteth the body of him that planted the truth of the Christian Faith in these parts." ⁶

In the city of Canterbury, between the cathedral and St. Martin's, lies the diminutive church of St. Pancras. This also is a monument of St. Augustine's, and (as we shall now begin to call him, St.) Ethelbert's piety. St. Pancras' was the church, it will be remembered, in which the king used to assist at idolatrous rites before his conversion ; and he would have it among the first of those which were cleansed from heathen pollution, and converted into temples of the Living God. He accordingly made it over, with the land adjoining, to St. Augustine. By him it was duly purified, and consecrated in honour of St. Pancras, who suffered martyrdom at the age of fourteen, and has ever been accounted the especial patron of children and young persons. St. Pancras *appears to have been selected as patron of this church*

⁶ *Vide Somner's History of Canterbury, with Battely's additions.*

in reference to St. Gregory's interview with the English slaves at Rome. The Evil Spirit, as tradition says, did not relinquish his hold over this church without a fierce and terrific struggle. It is related, that, when St. Augustine first celebrated mass within it, the building was violently shaken, as if by an earthquake. Thorn, the chronicler, speaks of marks as apparent in his time upon the southern exterior wall, which were accounted as "marks of the Beast;" and Mr. Somner, the historian of Canterbury, implies that some such appearance was still to be traced in the ruins of the church as late as the year 1640. On the other hand, St. Bede the Venerable, who flourished little more than a century after the period at which the circumstance is said to have happened, and who gained his information, as he tells us,⁷ relative to the transactions at Canterbury, from Albinus, abbot of St. Augustine's monastery, is silent upon the subject. No doubt, St. Bede's silence is observable, and the marks on the wall admit of being explained in other than supernatural ways. Yet, if St. Bede is to furnish evidence on one side, he must in fairness be brought forward as a witness on the other also; and there is no doubt that he speaks to the fact of miracles generally as rife at the time of St. Augustine's visit to England, so as to give the utmost probability to particular occurrences of an alleged supernatural character. Under these circumstances, it may reasonably be questioned whether his silence upon the wonderful phenomena which are said to have accompanied the first consecration of the Host at St. Pancras' is so conclusive against the story, as his general testimony to the frequency of such manifestations at the time is in favour of it. They, at all events, who remember how violently the Evil Spirit once convulsed a body from

⁷ Prolog. in Hist. Eocl.

which he was being ejected by Divine power,⁸ and who have perhaps been led to refer the mysterious sufferings of holy persons on their death-bed to some similar conflict between the Holy Spirit labouring to put His final seal upon an elect soul, and the Tempter trying to regain his possession of it by a last and desperate effort, will see nothing to startle them in the fact of the Devil even visibly contending for a familiar haunt, when Christ first glorified it by His presence, and leaving the vestiges of his malice when precluded from displaying the trophies of his victory.

The royal grant of the building which was afterwards converted into the church of St. Pancras, included, as we have said, the plot of ground adjoining; and this ground became the site of the celebrated monastery of St. Peter and Paul, afterwards known by the name of St. Augustine's. So great a work and conspicuous a memorial of our Saint, where his sacred ashes long reposed, and which remained as a standing monument of his piety and apostolical labours, till, with the other religious houses of England, it fell under the sacrilegious hand of the tyrant, will require more than a passing notice in these pages, and shall accordingly form the subject of a distinct chapter.

⁸ Mark ix. 25, 26.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONASTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

WE have already seen that both at the house in Stable-gate, and still more at Ethelbert's palace, St. Augustine and his companions had formed themselves into something of a regular community, and exemplified, as far as circumstances allowed, the practice of the religious life. Indeed, their course in this respect may be said to have been chalked out for them, independently of any private preferences of their own, or of any view which might be taken of the expediency of such a mode of life towards the purposes of their mission. When at Rome, they had been brethren of a monastery; and, so far as they had fallen during their travels into less orderly ways, the change had been attended, as we have seen, with obvious inconveniences. These evils St. Gregory had sought to correct, by giving St. Augustine a more absolute authority over the rest, and so reconstituting the body a strictly religious one. As soon, therefore, as the missionaries were once more settled under the same roof, they returned, quite as a matter of course, to their old habits and arrangements; St. Augustine taking his place among them as their rightful Superior. Thus they carried out the evident intentions, or more probably the express instructions, of the Supreme Pontiff.

Still, their missionary avocations must have left them *but little time for the proper and characteristic exercises*

of the religious state. From the day of their arrival at Canterbury, they were constantly abroad in the streets and lanes of the city, preaching the Gospel to every creature. In our own time, when the essence of religion is so commonly thought to consist in its social duties alone, the importance even of the monastic institute is apt to be measured principally by the facilities which it offers towards the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. But it must not be forgotten, that, under the Gospel, the first and great commandment is the love of God, and the love of our brethren but the second. Beneficial then beyond expression as religious communities have been in ameliorating the condition of the poor, and evangelizing the heathen, it is chiefly as they have given scope for contemplation of Divine mysteries, the practice of complete obedience, and the cultivation of the interior life, that they have been bright centres of light, and gushing fountains of health, in the midst of a darkened and diseased world. It has been observed, that some of the principal Gospel types of the Church represent her as a witness, rather than a herald; a calm and clear and dazzling "light" in a dark place; a "city set on an hill;" a beautiful and expansive "tree," which sheds its fragrance around, and draws the lonely under its shelter. These and the like figures give an idea of the calm majesty which gradually gains upon the world, rather than of the zealous ministrations which tell by their immediate effects; though, of course, among the manifold operations of the One Spirit, these also have a chief place in the Church of Christ.

Such an earthly transcript in epitome of the "Jerusalem which is above" would our holy Archbishop and *his royal disciple* leave behind them in our fair English *land*; even a godly company, who should "wait on the

Lord without distraction," and help our country by their prayers, while others were engaged in more laborious offices of charity.

The more immediate motive, however, which led to the foundation of St. Augustine's monastery seems to have been a desire on the part both of St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert to provide a suitable burial-place for themselves and their successors. This was an object which the incipient and unformed state of the Church in England would render one of no little interest and importance. Very different, indeed, from that over-sensitiveness on the score of posthumous respect, so common in the world, are the precautions which even a Saint might wish to take, with the object of securing his own poor body from the chance of abuse; since, whether his own, or another's, that body is equally the temple of the Holy Spirit, whose honour is accordingly concerned in its safe disposal and reverential treatment. The same consideration may lead Saints to deprecate insults to their remains after death, which has sometimes led them to acquiesce in the veneration paid them by the world during their lives; a regard, namely, to God's honour, which they might endanger by a different course.⁹ Moreover, in the last and highest stage of humility, a Christian comes to feel as indifferent about himself, any way, as if he were some other person, and so deals with himself just as he would with what does not belong to him; and thus the effects of self-conceit, and of self-contempt, will often wear the same appearance in the eyes of a superficial observer. While one Saint, from deep consciousness of personal demerit, studies to be wholly

⁹ See Rodriguez, on Christian Perfection, vol. ii. Tract 3. c. 31. Also a remarkable anecdote to the same point in A. Butler's *Life of St. Francis of Assisium*.

overlooked and forgotten : another, no less humble, may manifest so entire an indifference on points which concern himself either way, as even to incur the imputation of vain-glory in the midst of the most abject self-renunciation. It is said (as illustrative of the former view of humility), that St. Francis Borgia positively refused to let his picture be taken when on his death-bed, as accounting the bodily likeness of such a sinner unworthy to be preserved ; whereas others, whose names are no less venerated in the Church, have yielded to the wishes of their friends in such trifles without the least hesitation and misgiving.¹

In the same way, it is possible to conceive Saints acting quite oppositely with respect to the disposal of their own remains after death : one being prepared to encounter the imputation of selfishness and vanity through zeal for God's honour, or rather thinking of this alone ; another being so penetrated with the sense of his own nothingness as to be quite careless of the whereabouts, or disposal, of those ashes, which at all events are to be re-collected and re-animated at the Great Day. St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert are instances on the one side, and St. Monica, St. Swithin, St. Francis of Assisium, &c., on the reverse. And yet, that the side of indifference about this matter is not clearly the more religious in itself, seems to be proved by the fact of its having suggested itself as natural to some infidels and scoffers.

Even then did St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert (or rather probably the latter) look to themselves only in their desire of securing an appropriate receptacle for their mortal remains, the reverence claimed by God's tabernacle, even after death, and the charity which *seeks to take away* the occasions of sin and scandal from

¹ See *Life of St. Francis Borgia*, in Alban Butler.

the path of others, not to speak of the natural desire which a Catholic feels to repose under the shade of a church, and in the neighbourhood of her prayers and solemn liturgical offices, will sufficiently account for their anxiety on a point which another Saint, or they at another time, might have been content to waive. We may also suppose, that, in desiring honourable sepulture for himself and his successors, St. Augustine had an eye to the dignity of his office, as well as a charitable regard to those instincts which lead even heathens to venerate the dead. Moreover, we must not hastily assume that each Saint was solicitous for himself alone. Was it not, also, that our holy Apostle and right princely king, who had been joined on earth in many a labour of love, had a natural wish to be united in death? Lovely and pleasant were they in their lives, nor would they be in their death divided; each thinking, perhaps, that the fulness of his brother's sanctity might be some sort of protection to his own bareness; but the king being more especially desirous to keep, even in death, by the side of one from whose lips he had derived the words of eternal life, and whose hands had clothed him, as in Christ's stead, with the white garment of innocence.

It is evident, however, that the archbishop and king had other objects at heart besides that of providing themselves a burial-place. They contemplated the erection of a monastery as well as a church. The foundation-stone of the building was laid in the year 598; but so great was its extent, that seven full years passed away before it was fit for consecration. The buildings, when complete, must have occupied a considerable space of ground, as is plain from the boundaries assigned to them in the original deeds of gift.² What portion of the work was finished

² *St Martin's church on the east, Burgate on the south, Drouin*

at once, and what subsequently added, does not clearly appear, except that king Eadbald, Ethelbert's son and successor, built the chapel in honour of St. Mary, into which St. Dunstan was in the habit of retiring at night for private devotion. The monastery was consecrated at Christmas 605, in the presence of the king, queen, their family, and court. The original tutelaries were St. Peter and St. Paul; but St. Augustine was added by St. Dunstan, who dedicated the monastery anew; after which it always went by the name of St. Augustine only.

To king Ethelbert, the founder, was allowed the privilege of naming the first abbot; and the choice fell on Peter, one of the original missionaries. As the chronological tables, according by Mr. Somner, make Peter's appointment coeval with the foundation of the monastery in 598, we cannot doubt that it was the result of a consultation with St. Augustine, by whose advice Ethelbert was guided in all his proceedings. Peter governed the monastery but two years, at the expiration of which he was sent by the king on a mission to France; and, on his return, was accidentally drowned at Ambleteuse, not far from Boulogne, at which place his body is said to rest in the church of the Blessed Virgin. His two immediate successors were Ruffinianus and Graciosus, who appear to have formed part of the company of priests sent over by the Pope in 601 to reinforce the mission.

This monastery received many rich endowments, and high immunities, from successive kings of England. Ethelbert, the founder, granted it an exemption from taxes, and some peculiar manorial rights;³ it had like-

street on the west and north. And in another charter still more particularly. See Somner's *Canterbury and Battely's Appendix*.

³ *Among others*, the privilege called *Infangenthef*, or the right of *judging a thief caught on the premises*.

wise the privilege of a mint, for coinage of money, granted, some say, by Ethelbert, others, by Athelstan, and enjoyed till the reign of Henry II. Ethelbert's successor, Eadbald, besides building St. Mary's chapel,⁴ endowed it with the manor of Northbourne; and among its benefactors were also reckoned, of succeeding kings, Lothaire, Withrêd, Eadbert, Edmund, Kenewulf, Cuthred, Ethelwolf, Ethelbert, king of the West-Saxons, Canute, St. Edgar, and St. Edward the Confessor.

From the Holy See, the monastery of St. Augustine received other and more important privileges, with many distinguished titles of honour. It was designated the "first-born, and chief mother of monasteries in England," and the "Roman Chapel in England." The archbishop was forbidden to exercise prelatical authority over it: he was to visit it "out of love, as a brother," accounting the abbot of this monastery, as a legate of the Holy See, and a fellow-minister of the Gospel of peace. In General Councils, the Abbot of St. Augustine's was placed next to the Abbot of Monte Casino.⁵ No bishop might intrude into the monastery under colour of exercising episcopal functions, but only, with consent of the brethren, to solemnize religious offices. The date of this grant is as early as 611.⁶ The monastery of St. Augustine thus became a special appurtenance of the Holy Apostolic See, its relation to which is commonly recognized in the wording of all formal instruments.⁷

⁴ This chapel was taken down by the abbot Scotland in the time of Lanfranc, and a new and more splendid church erected in its place.—Thorn, col. 1768.

⁵ This was by a grant of Pope Leo, in 1055, and out of special respect to the "purity of the English Church."—Thorn.

⁶ Thorn, Chronic.

⁷ It is styled "*Monasterium, &c. ad Romanam ecclesiam nullo medio pertinens.*"

One of the most interesting benefactions which St. Augustine's monastery received, was that of king Canute, who transferred to it all the endowments of the convent of Minster, in Thanet, including the body of St. Mildred. The history of this event is as follows:—Minster was several times plundered and burned by the Danes, and its sacred inmates put to the sword. After the last disaster, in 1011, it was occupied by a few secular priests only, till at length, in 1027, king Canute made over all its possessions to St. Augustine's, and allowed the monks to remove St. Mildred's body; a step which was most violently resisted by the priests of Minster, who pursued the monks to the neighbouring river, across which they escaped with their precious spoil.

During the first five hundred years, or, as some say, five hundred and seventy, the Abbots of St. Augustine's received the benediction on their appointment from the Archbishop of Canterbury; and, in return, made their profession of canonical obedience to him. The direct subjection of the monastery to the Roman See, as in other cases, was designed, and for many centuries operated, not as a warrant for independence, but as a security against usurpation, and a protection to the authority of the Superior. A central power, like that of the Holy See, withdrawn from the risk of local influences, and the temptation to gratuitous interference, yet based at the same time on prerogatives, and guarded by sanctions, than which none can be more calculated to ensure deference and enlist devotion, would seem to be precisely that to which the best interests of the Church require that bodies of so singular and delicate a complexion as the monastic should be directly submitted, rather than *to any authority* of a more pressing nature. Neither *could there be anything* like the same guarantee for the

peace and well-being of such bodies in the decisions of an accidental bishop, as in those of the See, which represents, as it were, the collective wisdom of the Church. Yet, how to secure this object without injury to diocesan rights, seems to have been always more or less of a practical difficulty. For many centuries, an excellent understanding seems to have prevailed between the monastery of St. Augustine's and the Archbishops, notwithstanding the very peculiar position which St. Augustine's occupied, as the more immediate dependency of a foreign ecclesiastical power. The Archbishop not only came to the monastery when he pleased, to perform religious offices, but appears to have occasionally taken up his residence within its walls for change of air and occupation; just as a dignitary might now withdraw for relief from one scene of his duties to another, or from the town into the country. For a long time, too, the monks of Christ-church and St. Augustine's seem to have commonly walked together in religious processions.⁸ At length, in the tenth century, differences sprang up, which seem to have forced the Holy See upon guarding the dignity of her beloved daughter by fresh and very exclusive privileges. In 955, Pope John XIII. was obliged to require the monks of Christ-church to desist from molesting their brethren of St. Augustine's. This was followed up in 1059 by the grant of the mitre and other pontifical badges from Pope Alexander II. to Egelsine, the abbot of St. Augustine's. On the abbot's return to England, however, he was obliged to lay aside these ornaments (the effect of which was to give him absolute episcopal authority), at the in-

⁸ See MSS. in the library of Corpus College, Cambridge, as given in *Monast. Angl.*

stance of the king and archbishop, and was compelled to quit the country. He was succeeded by Scotland, a Norman, who greatly increased the possessions of the monastery, but who is charged by Thorn with making unwarrantable concessions of privilege to Archbishop Lanfranc. Upon his death Lanfranc, according to Thorn, (who was himself an abbot of St. Augustine's and writes, like a partizan,) endeavoured to secure the election of one of his own monks, but was obliged, though reluctantly, to give the benediction to the abbot Wydo, who was more acceptable to the society. At length, in 1124, the archbishop of the time positively refused the benediction to an abbot who had the approbation of the king and of the See of Rome; the question was debated in a provincial council, in the presence of the king and Cardinal Cremona, the Pope's legate, and, in the end, the Bishop of Chichester was empowered by the Cardinal, in virtue of his authority as representative of the Apostolic See, to administer the benediction under the circumstance of the archbishop's refusal. From that time the abbots seem to have invariably received benediction by a mandate from the Holy See, with the exception, perhaps, of Abbot Silvester in 1152, concerning whom accounts differ, and whose formal profession of obedience to the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury is said to have been preserved in the archives of that church. On the appointment of Abbot Roger in 1173, an ineffectual attempt was made by the archbishop to recover his privilege; in consequence of which the abbot went to Rome, received the benediction from the holy Father himself, and returned with the mitre and ring, which he forthwith assumed without *opposition*. Such accounts do not certainly give a comfortable idea of the state of things at the time; but we

are happily under no temptation to make such subjects a matter of criticism, for which we have neither warrant nor materials.

It now follows to speak of the adverse fortunes of this once famous monastery.

The first disaster which befel it, was the loss of its aboriginal privilege, as the burying-place of the archbishops of Canterbury and kings of England. The kings were not buried here, as would appear, after the archbishopric of Brithwald, towards the close of the 7th century; and, about half a century later, Archbishop Cuthbert obtained leave to bury within churches, and was himself the first archbishop whose body rested within the cathedral. This act of Archbishop Cuthbert's went far towards producing serious consequences, but they were averted for the time. Twenty years afterwards, Lambrith, abbot of St. Augustine's, came twice to the monastery of Christ-church, to demand the bodies of Archbishop Cuthbert and his successor, Bregwin, in order to their burial, according to ancient usage, in St. Augustine's monastery. He was obliged, however, to return without success; though, on the latter occasion, he came with an armed force, intending to carry the bodies away in spite of resistance. Thereupon, the brethren of St. Augustine's made an appeal to Rome; in the mean time, the monks of Christ-church elected Lambrith to the Archbishopric, and so the differences were adjusted. However, Lambrith himself was buried, by his own express desire, at St. Augustine's.

The monastery was often exposed to the fury of the Danes. Accounts differ as to the extent of injury which they were able to inflict upon it. If we may believe *the chronicler Thorn*, who was himself Abbot of St

Augustine's, their designs were signally and providentially frustrated. He says, that when the Danes destroyed Canterbury, under king Etheldred, in 1011, some of them sacrilegiously entered the monastery of St. Augustine; and that one of them, more shameless than his companions, approached the tomb of our Apostle, and stole the pall with which the tomb was covered, hiding it under his arm. The account adds, that the pall clung to his flesh, as if it had been glued, and that the thief, conscience-stricken, went to the monks and confessed his fault; after which the Danes made no farther attacks upon the monastery. It is true that older chroniclers take no notice of this miracle; but one of them relates, that the abbot of the time was suffered by the Danes to escape, which agrees, so far, with Thorn's account. On the whole, though the miracle has been impugned by some modern authorities, there seems no sufficient ground for rejecting it, while there are, of course, the strongest antecedent reasons in its favour. The Protestant Archbishop Parker considers that St. Augustine's certainly suffered from the Danes; but he gives no other reason for the opinion, than the great *à priori* improbability, that a monastery which had demeaned itself haughtily towards the archbishops of Canterbury should have been permitted to escape, when other monasteries suffered, and the city of Canterbury itself was laid waste.

In 1168, on the Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, the monastery was nearly destroyed by fire. Many ancient documents were consumed, and the shrines of St. Augustine and other Saints seriously damaged. Pope Alexander III. confirmed the annexation of the church of Feversham to the monastery with a view to *the repairs*, and farther assigned to it the churches of *Minster and Middleton*. In 1271 the abbey suffered

from the violence of another element, though far less, apparently, than the neighbouring city. It was, remarkably enough, on the Feast of the Translation of St. Augustine. It thundered and lightened all night, and the rain came down, and for several days afterwards, in such torrents, that the whole city and surrounding country were well nigh devastated. The water stood high in the court of the monastery, and in the church; but, though the waters raged and swelled, God was in the midst of her, and she was not removed.

In the reign of Edward I., St. Augustine's, in common with other religious houses, was materially affected by the statute of mortmain; and from that time forward the annexation of benefices to monasteries which had already begun, grew much more frequent than before, as a compensation to them for the losses they sustained by the failure of other sources of income. The impropriation of livings to religious houses is said to have arisen in a desire to obviate the risk of disagreements between the clergymen of churches built upon abbey lands, and the monks to whom the lands belonged. But, in process of time, benefices were annexed to monasteries simply as endowments. The effect of such vast acquisitions of territory and revenue could not but have been injurious to the primitive simplicity of monastic institutions, even if not at variance with their original idea. Wealth can hardly pass through the hands without leaving some traces of defilement behind it: the love of influence which riches foster, even when men account themselves not as owners, but as mere trustees of worldly goods; the consciousness of an almost creative power which they suggest, even under the most favourable circumstances, has shipwrecked many a soul which was comparatively safe against the more vulgar forms of covet

ousness, the desire of ostentation, or the appetite for mere hoarding. It is true that monastic bodies did not seek the wealth which they received ; and true also, that in no other quarter could large accumulations of property have centred with so much advantage to the world at large ; for monks were proverbially the most considerate of landlords, the most open-hearted and open-handed of hosts, and the most liberal of benefactors to the poor. Yet that, as far as the internal strictness of monastic institutions is concerned, they degenerated from their first purity in proportion as they came to enjoy " great possessions," seems also undeniable, and what no Catholic need shrink from denying. If it deduct nothing from the perfection of the Church itself, that it is like the net which encloses many kinds of fishes, so does it prove nothing against the perfection of the monastic theory, that even those heavenly safeguards against the spirit of the world which it provides, should themselves have proved at times insufficient against the power of extraordinary temptations.

Even that infidel writer, who, to our shame, has long been suffered to guide the youth of this country in forming their views of English history ; even Hume himself considers it "safest" to confine charges against the ancient monastic bodies of England to the points of "idleness," "ignorance," "superstition," and the like, as distinct from any more glaring crimes ; and has no hesitation in allowing that the suspicion of flagrant irregularities was propagated upon the slenderest evidence, in order to give some colour to the attack which was in contemplation. We might of course go far beyond the view of the case with which this historian permits us to *close*, and grant the justice of many, or even all of the *worst allegations* which were made against particular

monasteries, without so much as advancing one single step towards justifying the measures which were actually directed against them. For, first: Ecclesiastical reforms do not properly come within the province of kings and parliaments. We cheerfully render to Cæsar his own, but we claim of him in return not to meddle with the things of God. Secondly: No extent of corruption in the bodies could have warranted the means actually taken to cure it. We must not do evil that good may come. Thirdly: The utmost stretch of charity will not allow the hope that Henry was actuated in his proceedings by any honest desire of correcting abuses. But we are spared from the necessity of concessions, even for argument's sake, which the enemies of the Catholic Faith themselves do not demand of us.

And yet it is perhaps impossible to look into the records of the particular monastery which has led to these remarks, St. Augustine's at Canterbury, without finding reason to suspect the absence, as time went on, of that high and heavenly temper to which such bodies are designed to bear witness, and to which, with whatever drawbacks of earth, their witness has been on the whole so full and conspicuous. Fierce contests for prerogative, jealous resistance of encroachments, the sort of *esprit de corps*, which, without the greatest watchfulness, even religious bodies are in continual danger of substituting for any higher bond of union, and motive to zeal, with all its attendant liabilities to haughtiness, ambition, and uncharitableness—such, judging from Thorn's annals of his own monastery, would seem to have been the temptation to which these societies were peculiarly liable from the time when the riches of the world began to flow into their treasury. One cannot but fear, for instance, that the feelings with which the monks of St. Augustine's in Thorn's day at

least, regarded their brethren of Christ-church, was rather that which we may conceive some powerful college harbouring towards its rival in the same university, than that of one member of Christ's body towards one of its fellow members. There is ever a risk lest minor spheres of attachment should become ultimate centres of those affections which they are providentially intended not to absorb, but to elicit. Such is the peril against which, so far as we can form an opinion, the brethren of St. Augustine's seem to have been exposed. We have already had occasion to notice the harsh and even bitter terms in which Thorn speaks of Archbishop Lanfranc. It must also be mentioned, with sorrow, that in one place the same chronicler seems to give in, almost exultingly, to current stories against the brethren of Christ-church, as though his own monastery could gain credit by its sister's disgrace. And yet all reports seem to agree in giving Christ-church a high character among the religious establishments of England. To go to a different point, there is certainly something unsatisfactory in the accounts of those sumptuous entertainments which monastic bodies were in the practice of giving, under the plea, and no doubt in the spirit, of hospitality, to the great men of the time. The enthronization of an archbishop was a more legitimate occasion of such splendid festivities than seems always to have existed; yet one cannot but feel that St. Augustine and his monks would have been somewhat startled by the bills of fare in which later abbots appear to have seen nothing but the natural result of a compliance with St. Paul's injunction to hospitality. Several of these documents will be found in Mr. Somner's History of Canterbury; and *they indicate*, no doubt, a conception of hospitality, *which none can deny* to be magnificent, but which be-

longs rather to this world than to the angelic life of the cloister. No common man must he have been who, after one of these sumptuous banquets, could settle down at once to his pallet of straw, or his simple meal of fish and eggs; or who, while the prospect of such excitements was imminent, or their memory fresh, could pursue his meditations with the requisite freedom from disturbance. It is pleasant, however, to turn from these occasional, and, as we may suppose, rare infringements of the usual simplicity of monastic life, to the description of its ordinary routine, as practised in England according to the Benedictine rule. Thus we read, for instance, that "Every monk had his own cell to himself; a place of repose, where he might sleep undisturbed, or give himself freely to prayer and spiritual exercises, without any kind of molestation from any of the rest of the brethren. . . . They had a mat and a hard pillow to lie down upon, and a blanket or rug to keep them warm. They slept in their clothes, girt with girdles, and thereby were always ready to attend their night devotions at the canonical hours. In the dormitory a perpetual silence was enjoined." However, that, despite these goodly provisions, the spirit of Dunstan, Anselm, and Becket was no longer alive in the monasteries of England, at least in the sixteenth century, is but too apparent from the history of their dissolution. Among the heart-sickening details of that monstrous sacrilege, there is nothing sadder to contemplate than the criminal facility with which, almost without exception, the monastic bodies suffered themselves to be threatened, or bribed, into the surrender of an heritage, compared with which, their lives or their liberties should have seemed but as dust in the balance. Thus, every officer of St. Augustine's, from the abbe

Part of this book is bound, for some reason which only a librarian can explain, in Vol. 12,

downwards, put his hand to a paper, by which the goods of the house, including all the sacred vessels and ornaments of the church, were made over unreservedly and unconditionally into the king's hands. The reader who desires further satisfaction on this painful subject will find in Dugdale two inventories; one, of the church-plate and ornaments, the other, of the vestments, all of which were forthwith transferred into the king's treasury. The vestments were pronounced "unfit for his Majesty's use;" not so, alas! the church-plate. And thus the "monstrances" and chalices from which the highest Mysteries had been for ages presented to adoring eyes, or dispensed to faithful souls, were snatched from the very altars by profane hands, to promote the purposes of avarice if not even to serve the uses of luxury. Among the valuables which are comprised in these catalogues, were gilt statues of St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert.

St. Augustine's monastery soon fell into ruins, and the ground on which it stood was let out to the highest bidder. Even in days of which reverence for sacred things and places was so characteristic as those of Charles I. the profanation of this hallowed spot seems to have attracted no public notice; much less, of course, in the ages following. In what way the ground and buildings which still remain upon it (all of them, it is believed, of comparatively modern date) are now portioned out, and for what purposes they are employed, the reader is probably aware, or may at least easily inform himself. There is no need to put the melancholy fact on record; more especially since the days seem happily coming round, when the voice of Catholic England will cry out, not merely for the protection of such holy enclosures from abuse, *but for their restoration to the objects for which they were anciently set apart.* But it is time to resume the
of our narrative.



HERMIT SAINTS

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ST. AUGUSTINE. which only a
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See Vol. 12^a

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HERMIT SAINTS

11-11-11

LIVES
OF
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

Hermit Saints.

V. 4

ST. GUNDLEUS.

ST. EDELWALD.

ST. HELIER.

ST. BETTELIN.

ST. HERBERT.

ST. NEOT.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

MANSUETI HEREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

LONDON:

JAMES TOOVEY, 36, ST. JAMES'S STREET.

1844.

THE
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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Lives are the work of several persons who have written independently of each other, though their views will be found to be coincident on some important and difficult points which are brought into discussion in the course of the narrative. The Legend of St. Bettelin belongs to more than one author.

Holy Thursday, 1844.

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A LEGEND OF

St. Gundleus,

HERMIT IN WALES, ABOUT A. D. 500.

THE Christian lives in the past and in the future, and in the unseen ; in a word, he lives in no small measure in the unknown. And it is one of his duties, and a part of his work, to make the unknown known ; to create within him an image of what is absent, and to realize by faith what he does not see. For this purpose he is granted certain outlines and rudiments of the truth, and from thence he learns to draw it out into its full proportions and its substantial form,—to expand and complete it ; whether it be the absolute and perfect truth, or truth under a human dress, or truth in such a shape as is most profitable for him. And the process, by which the word which has been given him, “returns not void,” but brings forth and buds and is accomplished and prospers, is Meditation.

It is Meditation¹ which does for the Christian what Investigation does for the children of men. Investigation may not be in his power, but he may always

¹ Some excellent remarks on this subject will be found in the Introduction to a work which has appeared since these pages were sent to press, “Life of Christ, from the Latin of St. Bonaventura.”

meditate. For Investigation he may possess no materials or instruments ; he needs but little aid or appliance from without for Meditation. The barley loaves and few small fishes are made to grow under his hand ; the oil fills vessel after vessel till not an empty one remains ; the water-pots become the wells of a costly liquor ; and the very stones of the desert germinate and yield him bread. He trades with his Lord's money as a good steward ; that in the end his Lord may receive His own with usury.

This is the way of the divinely illuminated mind, whether in matters of sacred doctrine or of sacred history. Here we are concerned with the latter. I say then, when a true and loyal lover of the brethren attempts to contemplate persons and events of time past, and to bring them before him as actually existing and occurring, it is plain, he is at loss about the details ; he has no information about those innumerable accidental points, which might have been or have happened this way or that way, but in the very person and the very event did happen one way,—which were altogether uncertain beforehand, but which have been rigidly determined ever since. The scene, the parties, the speeches, the grouping, the succession of particulars, the beginning, the ending, matters such as these he is obliged to imagine in one way, if he is to imagine them at all. The case is the same in the art of painting ; the artist gives stature, gesture, feature, expression, to his figures ; what sort of an abstraction or a nonentity would he produce without this allowance ? it would be like telling him to paint a dream, or relations and qualities, or panic terrors, or scents and sounds, if you confine him to truth in the mere letter ; or he must evade *the difficulty*, with the village artist in the story, who

having to represent the overthrow of the Egyptians in the sea, on their pursuing the Israelites, daubed a board with red paint, with a *nota bene* that the Israelites had got safe to land, and the Egyptians were all drowned. Of necessity then does the painter allow his imagination to assist his facts ; of necessity and with full right ; and he will make use of this indulgence well or ill, according to his talents, his knowledge, his skill, his ethical peculiarities, his general cultivation of mind.

In like manner, if we would meditate on any passage of the gospel history, we must insert details indefinitely many, in order to meditate at all ; we must fancy motives, feelings, meanings, words, acts, as our connecting links between fact and fact as recorded. Hence holy men have before now put dialogues into the mouths of sacred persons, not wishing to intrude into things unknown, not thinking to deceive others into a belief of their own mental creations, but to impress upon themselves and upon their brethren, as by a seal or mark, the substantiveness and reality of what Scripture has adumbrated by one or two bold and severe lines. Ideas are one and simple ; but they gain an entrance into our minds, and live within us, by being broken into detail.

Hence it is, that so much has been said and believed of a number of Saints with so little historical foundation. It is not that we may lawfully despise or refuse a great gift and benefit, historical testimony, and the intellectual exercises which attend on it, study, research, and criticism ; for in the hands of serious and believing men they are of the highest value. We do not refuse them, but in the cases in question, we have them not. The bulk of Christians have them not ; the *multitude* has them not ; the *multitude* forms its

view of the past, not from antiquities, not critically, not in the letter ; but it developes its small portion of true knowledge into something which is like the very truth though it be not it, and which stands for the truth when it is but like it. Its evidence is a legend ; its facts are a symbol ; its history a representation ; its drift is a moral.

Thus then is it with the biographies and reminiscences of the Saints. " Some there are which have no memorial, and are as though they had never been ;" others are known to have lived and died, and are known in little else. They have left a name, but they have left nothing besides. Or the place of their birth, or of their abode, or of their death, or some one or other striking incident of their life, gives a character to their memory. Or they are known by martyrologies or services, or by the traditions of a neighbourhood, or by the title or the decorations of a Church. Or they are known by certain miraculous interpositions which are attributed to them. Or their deeds and sufferings belong to countries far away, and the report of them comes musical and low over the broad sea. Such are some of the small elements, which, when more is not known, faith is fain to receive, love dwells on, meditation unfolds, disposes, and forms ; till by the sympathy of many minds, and the concert of many voices, and the lapse of many years, a certain whole figure is developed with words and actions, a history and a character,—which is indeed but the *portrait* of the original, yet is as much as a portrait, an imitation rather than a copy, a likeness on the whole, but in its particulars more or less the work of imagination. It is but collateral and parallel to the truth ; it is the truth under assumed conditions ; *it brings out a true idea, yet by inaccurate or defec-*

tive means of exhibition ; it savours of the age, yet it is the offspring from what is spiritual and everlasting. It is the picture of a saint, who did other miracles, if not these ; who went through sufferings, who wrought righteousness, who died in faith and peace,—of this we are sure ; we are not sure, should it so happen, of the when, the where, the how, the why, and the whence.

Who, for instance, can reasonably find fault with the Acts of St. Andrew, even though they be not authentic, for describing the Apostle as saying on sight of his cross, “Receive, O Cross, the disciple of Him who once hung on thee, my Master Christ ?” For was not the Saint sure to make an exclamation at the sight, and must it not have been in substance such as this ? And would much difference be found between his very words when translated, and these imagined words, if they be such, drawn from what is probable, and received upon rumours issuing from the time and place ? And when St. Agnes was brought into that horrible house of devils, are we not quite sure that angels were with her, even though we do not know any one of the details ? What is there wanton then or superstitious in singing the Antiphon, “Agnes entered the place of shame, and found the Lord’s angel waiting for her,” even though the fact come to us on no authority ? And again, what matters it though the angel that accompanies us on our way be not called Raphael, if there be such a protecting spirit, who at God’s bidding does not despise the least of Christ’s flock in their journeyings ? And what is it to me though heretics have mixed the true history of St. George with their own fables or impieties, if a Christian George, Saint and Martyr there was, as we believe ?

And we in after time, who look back upon the legendary picture, cannot for very caution's sake and reverence, reject the whole, part of which, we know not how much, may be, or certainly is, true. Nor have we means to separate ascertained fact from fiction ; the one and the other are worked in together. We can do nothing else but accept what has come down to us as symbolical of the unknown, and use it in a religious way for religious uses. At the best it is the true record of a divine life ; but at the very worst it is not less than the pious thoughts of religious minds,—thoughts frequent, recurrent, habitual, of minds many in many generations.

The brief notice of St. Gundleus, which is now to follow, is an illustration of some of these remarks. It will be but legendary ; it would be better, were it not so ; but in fact, nothing remains on record except such tokens and symbols of the plain truth, in honour of one whose name has continued in the Church, and to the glory of Him who wrote it in her catalogue.

St. Gundleus was a king or chieftain, whose territory lay in Glamorganshire, and he lived about A. D. 500. He was the father of the great St. Cadoc, and his wife was Gladusa, the eldest of ten daughters of King Brachan. Of these ladies one was St. Almehda ; another St. Keyna ; a third, little deserving any honourable memory herself, was the mother of St. David.

One night a supernatural voice broke in upon the slumbers of St. Gundleus and Gladusa. "The King of heaven, the Ruler of earth, hath sent me hither : " thus it spoke ; "that ye may turn to His ministry with *your whole heart*. You He calls and invites, as He *hath* chosen and redeemed you, when He mounted on

the Cross. I will show you the straight path, which ye must keep, unto the inheritance of God : lift up your minds, and for what is perishable, slight not your souls. On the river's bank there is a rising ground ; and where a white steed is standing, there is the place of thy habitation."

The king arose in the morning ; he gave up his sovereignty to his son Cadoc ; he left his home, he proceeded to the hill, and found the animal described. There he built a Church, and there he began an abstinent and saintly life ; his dress a haircloth ; his drink water ; his bread of barley mixed with wood ashes. He rose at midnight and plunged into cold water ; and by day he laboured for his livelihood. Holy Cadoc his son, who at length became Abbot of Carvan, a neighbouring monastery, often came to him, and made him of good heart, reminding him that the crown is the reward, not of beginners, but of those who persevere in good things.

The hill wanted water ; St. Gundleus offered up his prayers to God, and touched the dry soil with his staff ; a spring issued from it clear and unfailing.

When his end was approaching, he sent to St. Dubricius, Bishop of Llandaff, and to St. Cadoc his own son. From the hands of the latter he received his last communion, and he passed to the Lord on the 29th of March. An angelic host was seen about his tomb, and sick people, on invoking his intercession, were healed.

His Church, which became his shrine, was near the sea and exposed to plunderers. Once when pirates from the Orkneys had broken into it, and carried off its contents, a storm overtook them on their return, and, dashing their vessels against each other, sunk all but two. At another time a robber, who had made off

with a sacred chalice and vestments, was confronted by the sea apparently mounting up against him and overwhelming him. He was forced back into the Church, where he remained till morning, when he was arrested, and, but for the Bishop of Llandaff, would have undergone capital punishment.

Whether St. Gundleus led this very life, and wrought these very miracles, I do not know ; but I do know that they are Saints whom the Church so accounts, and I believe that, though this account of him cannot be proved, it is a symbol of what he did and what he was, a picture of his saintliness, and a specimen of his power.

A

Legend of St. Helier,

HERMIT IN JERSEY. ..

INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages are principally derived from the Acts of St. Helier, published by the Bollandists among the Lives of Saints honoured on the 16th of July. The story is here called a legend, because from the mistakes made by the author of the Acts, and from the distance of time at which he lived from the age of the Saint, many things which he advances rest on little authority. From the occurrence of the word Normannia, the Bollandists argue that he lived after the ninth century, at least three hundred years after St. Helier. He also mistakes Childebert the first for Childebert the second, and places the events which he relates after Brunehault, the famous queen of Austrasia. Again the vague words *Australis climatis fortissimus*, applied to Sigebert, looks very like a perversion of Austrasia, the ancient name for the eastern part of France. On the other hand, it is not by any means meant to assert that the whole of the narrative is fiction. The author of the Acts, from several notices which will appear in the *course of the legend*, was acquainted with Jersey ; he

therefore represents the traditions of his time current in the island with respect to St. Helier. Traces of that tradition remain to this day in the islands, and what is now called St. Helier's hermitage agrees completely with the description of the place given in the Acts printed by the Bollandists. Again the journey from Terouenne (a town near Boulogne, destroyed by the Emperor Charles V.) along the coast to Normandy, is described with accuracy, and traces of the honour formerly paid to the Saint in the diocese of Boulogne are recorded in the commentary of the Bollandists prefixed to the Acts. What is perhaps most important of all, these Acts are corroborated by the early Acts of St. Marculfus in many points, as for instance in the story of the repulsion of the Saxon fleet, and in the number of the inhabitants said to be in the islands. The Bollandists in the first volume of May assign the life of St. Marculfus to a period not later than the year 640, within the first century after St. Helier flourished. From all this, it appears probable that the leading facts of the story are true. We may even be warranted in supposing that God was pleased, for the conversion of the wild population of these islands, to work miracles by the hand of His servant. It is however still an open question, whether the particular miracles here recorded were those worked by St. Helier ; and it may here be observed that the miracles said to have occurred before his baptism have less evidence than any of the others, because the scene to which they are referred lies at a distance from the island, in which it appears that the author of the Acts wrote his account ; they have not therefore the insular tradition in their favour. In order to account for their appearance in the *Acts of the Saint*, it is not necessary to accuse the

author of dishonesty. In an age of faith, when miracles were not considered as proofs of a system which required no proof, but simply as instances of God's power working through His Saints, men were not critical about believing a little more or a little less. Again, there is no proof that the writers intended these stories to be believed at all. Many of them may have been merely *legends*, things worthy of being "read for example of life and instruction of manners."¹ Many a wild and grotesque tale about the triumphs of Saints and Angels over the powers of evil may have been told to the novices by an aged monk at recreation-time without being considered as an article of faith. Such stories were only meant to be symbols of the invisible, like the strange forms of devils which were sculptured about the Church. As for St. Helier's carrying his head in his hands, it may be observed that the writer only represents the story as a conjecture of the priest who attended on the Saint. And it may here be mentioned, that besides this of St. Helier, only three other instances have been found by us of similar legends, the well known story of St. Denys, that of St. Winifred, and that of St. Liverius, martyred by the Huns at Metz, A.D. 450, and mentioned in one Martyrology,² on the 25th of November. Of these four instances, that which is the best known, seems, though occurring in the Roman Breviary, to be tacitly or avowedly given up by most writers on the subject; and all, except the instance of St. Winifred, which may perhaps be considered in another place, are introduced to account for the removal of the body of a Saint from the place of his martyrdom. If there were not also a want of evi-

¹ *Sixth Article.*

² V. Usuard. ed. Soller, p. 700.

dence for these stories, this alone would not of course authorize us to mistrust them, for none would presume to limit the power of Almighty God or His favours to His Saints. As however they are related by writers far distant from the time when the events are said to have occurred, it may be allowed to class them among mythic legends. Into this form threw itself the strong belief of those faithful ages in the Christian truth that the bodies of Saints, the temples of the Holy Ghost, are under the special keeping of God, and that these precious vessels are one day to be again alive, and to be glorified for ever with the saintly souls, which without them are not perfect. The bodies of Saints have without doubt been kept incorrupt, as though life was still in them, and the belief that they had sometimes by God's power moved as though they were alive, was only a step beyond that fact. Finally, it may be well to mention, that as late as the year 1460, Henry VI. granted a favour to the Prior of the Canons of St. Helier, on account of the miracles still wrought by his intercession on the rocky islet where he died.

A LEGEND OF ST. HELIER.

A great many hundred years ago, when Childebert was king of the Franks, there lived in the ancient town of Tongres, a nobleman named Sigebert. He was one of that race of blue-eyed and long-haired warriors, who had left their own cold forests in the north of Germany, to settle down in the rich plains which border on the Rhine. Though he was a nobleman, he was not created by letters patent like our dukes and earls, but he was the chief of one of the many tribes of his nation ; his pedigree, though it was not enrolled in a herald's office, went as far back as Odin, the northern hero. His lands were all won by his good sword, and by the devotion of his followers, who loved him well, for he was kind and gentle to them, though rough to his enemies. His wife was a noble lady of Bavarian race, called Leufgard, and very happy they were together, for she was a beautiful and loving woman, and ever submissive to her lord's will. One thing however was wanting to them : they had no child, and they at length despaired of ever having any. As a last resource, they applied to a holy man, who lived near them, called Cunibert. Now you must know that at that time the Franks were a half heathen, half Christian people. Clovis, their most powerful chieftain, had become a Christian, and having been crowned and anointed king, had established something like an organized kingdom, principally by the aid of the Church. Great numbers of his followers had become Christian ; but in this wholesale conversion, the fierce northern warriors still remained half pagan, and some of them

were not yet Christian even in name. Among these unhappily were Sigebert and his wife ; they applied to Cunibert rather as to a man who had power with God, than because they believed in our holy faith. Cunibert, who had long wished to convert the noble Germans, and had mourned over their perverseness, promised to pray for them, if they in return agreed to give him the child who should be born, that he might offer him up to God. They agreed to these terms, and in due time the prayers of the holy man were heard, and the lady bore a beautiful child. Before he was born, however, Cunibert had gone to the Holy Land to visit the tomb of our Lord, and he remained in the East for three years. On his return, he claimed the fulfilment of their engagement ; but the lady looked into the laughing eyes of her fair child, and could not find it in her heart to part with him. And Sigebert laughed aloud, and said that his son should be a warrior, and wield sword and spear, and ride on horseback, not sing psalms and swing censers ; he should be brought up in a palace, and wear golden bracelets, and long flowing hair upon his head, as did his forefathers, not go about with a shaven crown and be a poor man like Cunibert. Thus did they stumble at the offence of the cross, as the world has done from the first. Holy Mary went on her way to Bethlehem poorly clad ; she had on a peasant's garment, and the world swept by and did not know that she was the rich casket which contained the pearl of great price, which whosoever findeth will sell all that he hath to buy.

Cunibert went away in sorrow, and probably gave up all thoughts of ever winning that beautiful child to Christ. But our blessed Lord, who was once himself *a little child*, had not forgotten him. For seven years

of his life he continued the same Frankish boy ; his limbs were strong and active, and every body loved him when they saw him playing about on the green sward. But all on a sudden, and without any apparent cause, he seemed to wither away ; his strength forsook him, and he became pale and weak. One day as he was lying in pain on his mother's lap, he said, " O, give me back to that holy man, by whose prayers I was born, and to whom you promised me." His parents saw that they could not struggle with the will of God, and sent their son, lying on a litter, to Cunibert. When the little boy saw Christ's servant, he said, " O, holy man, by whose prayers I was born, have pity upon me, and pray to your God to heal me." Then Cunibert knelt down beside the child's bed, and God heard his prayers, and the racking pains left him and he became as well as ever. Then the holy man took him to live with him, and gave him the name of Helier, making him a catechumen or candidate for Christian baptism. Then the boy was happy, for Cunibert taught him his letters, and he was soon able to read the Psalter, and to accompany his master when he sang the hours in Church. Cunibert had nothing but his own barley bread to give him, and except on feast-days he ate but one meal a day ; but he liked this better than the good cheer to which he had been accustomed at the joyous warrior's banquet in his father's hall.

All this while Helier was unbaptized ; his spiritual guide said nothing to him about it, and Helier wondered. He however remained in quiet patience, trusting that God would bring him to the laver of regeneration in His own good time. What was Cunibert's reason we cannot tell : perhaps he wished further

to subdue the impatience of the Frankish blood which ran in the boy's veins, or, as may by and bye appear more likely, God had revealed to him what was His gracious will with respect to that child. What were the mysterious movements of God's grace on the soul of Helier, we who have enjoyed the inestimable privilege of having from the first been taken up into the kingdom of heaven, cannot of course understand. We can only see the outward life of his soul and look on in wonder ; for now that Holy Ghost, who of old moulded the spirits of the prophets, and made St. John the Baptist to be a dweller in the wilderness and a holy eremite, dealt graciously with this child of pagan parents and made him give up the world to live a hard and lonely life. He gave him favour with the poor of the earth, among whom he had taken his place. The wild German who was in process of settling down from the savage forayer into the boor who tilled the ground, the half-Christianized giant of the northern forest, was attracted by the sanctity of this holy child, who lived day and night in the courts of the Lord's house. They brought him their sick and their blind, and thought that there was virtue in the touch of his little hand, and by the grace of God he healed them. It might have been thought that the wonders thus wrought by the hand of his child would have melted Sigebert's heart ; but instead of seeing in all this the power of the cross, he thought upon the charms and mysterious rites of his northern forests, and his heart was hardened. Then his clansmen came to him and said, " Let us kill this wizard Cunibert, and get thee back thy child ;" and he yielded to them and bade them slay the holy man.

Now God was pleased to reveal to Cunibert what

was coming upon him, and in the morning after they had sung matins together, he told the boy that his death was at hand, and bade him fly away. The child wept and said, "And will you not baptize me, O my father?" Cunibert replied, "God wills that another hand should do that, O my son." And the boy was very sorry and sore loath to part from his spiritual guide, but too obedient to gainsay him. They remained together all day in the Church, and only parted when evening fell, and then each retired to his cell. Cunibert, when he was alone, began as usual in quietness and peace to sing psalms, and as he was singing the hundred and first psalm, the wicked men entered. They rushed fiercely up to him, and just as he had come to the words "Quando venies ad me Domine," he bowed his head and they smote him down, and immediately went away. Helier, hearing a noise, came out of his little cell and went to his master's chamber. He found him lying dead, bathed in blood, but his countenance was placid, and his finger was still upon the book, pointing to the blessed words which were upon his lips when his spirit passed away. Helier wept sore at the sight, and cried aloud, "Wonderful is God in His Saints; He will give strength and power unto His people: blessed be God." But he had no time to lose, for he knew that his kinsmen would not be long in coming to look for him; so he covered the body of his dear master as well as he could with earth, and then with a sad heart he rushed away.

It was the dead of night when he left the Church, and he knew not where to go, but he went trusting in God's guidance. He might have returned to his mother's arms, but he preferred the dreary wild which he was treading to the dangers of his father's palace.

For six days he wandered on and on through the depths of pathless forests, dreading all the while to hear his father's horsemen pursuing him. At length he saw a distant town lying before him, and he lifted up his hands to God and said, "Lead me in Thy way, and I will walk in Thy truth. Let my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy name. My God, save me from the hand of the sinner, and from the hand of mine evil father, who worketh against Thy law, for Thou art He on whom I wait." Having said this, he walked on, and found himself in the town of Terouenne. He was now almost spent with fatigue, and meeting a poor widow, he applied to her for help. She took him into her house and took care of him for two weeks. After this, he asked her to show him some lonely place, where he could serve God in quiet. She led him a little way out of the town, to St. Mary's Church. The house of God was the place to which he naturally turned. His dwelling was in the porch of the Church, and here he remained for five years, living as he had done with Cunibert. The rain and the wet formed deep pools about him, and his shoes were worn out, so that the sharp pebbles were often stained with his blood. But notwithstanding all these hardships, it never struck him that he could go elsewhere, for the only home that he had ever known was the Church, except indeed his father's palace, and that of course was out of the question. And the only guide whom he had known was Cunibert, and now that he was gone, he was ignorant where to look for another upon earth. So during these five long years, he waited patiently, trusting in God. When he wanted food he went to the widow's house, and there too he had a wooden *pallet on which he stretched himself whenever he chose.*

This way of life attracted the people of the place ; they saw in the youth one whom Christ had marked for His own by suffering, and who crucified his body for the Lord's sake. The sick and infirm learned to put faith in his prayers, and God was pleased to hear them, as He had done at Tongres, and healed them. At length, at the end of five years, an incident happened which more than ever raised his fame. The wife of a nobleman in the town of Terouenne, named Rotaldus, was by a dreadful accident the means of the death of her own child. The first impulse of the poor father was to rush to the Bishop of the place, and to implore him to go to Helier, and to command him to pray that the babe might return to life. Helier was filled with wonder when he saw the Bishop approach him, and still more when he heard his command ; but obedience was natural to him, and he followed in silence to the Church where the corpse of the little child lay stretched upon a bier. Then Helier bethought himself that this would be a sign whether the time was at hand when Christ would regenerate his soul in the holy waters of baptism. So he knelt down and lifted up his hands to heaven and said, "O God, in whose hand is all power, who didst raise the child on whom the door was closed, and the son of the widow of Nain when borne on the bier, I pray thee, that if it is Thy will that I be made a Christian, may it be Thy will also of Thy great goodness that this child be raised to life." And when he had done praying, the child began to move and to cry for his mother.

The night after this miracle, Christ appeared in a vision to Helier, and bade him go to Nanteuil, where a man named Marculfus would baptize him, and teach him *what was to be his way of life*. As soon as he arose in

the morning, Helier set about obeying this command. It was not without tears that he took leave of the good woman who had been as a mother to him for so long ; but as soon as this parting was over, his heart was glad, for he was on his way to be made a Christian. The devil, however, who is ever roaming through the world, seeking whom he may devour, made one last effort to tempt him as he had tempted our blessed Lord. At the end of a day's journey, when Helier found himself near the little river Canche, the devil met him in a bodily shape, and said to him, "Dear youth, when thou mightest be rolling in all manner of worldly wealth, why wilt thou roam about alone, rushing after a visionary poverty?" But Helier knew the tempter by his advice ; though he stood alone on the banks of the solitary stream, he did not fear him, and he pressed boldly on, saying, "Away with thee to that toil which was laid upon thee from the time that thou didst fall from heaven and lose the name of Lucifer." Then the devil vanished away, and Helier pursued his journey. He went on through the district of Ponthieu into Normandy, and found St. Marculfus at the Vaulxdunes, a range of low sandy hills along the sea-shore.³

The holy man whom God assigned to Helier in place of Cunibert, was one who was well able to enter into the simplicity and fervour of the youth. He was fighting

³ This place, Vallesdunæ, is thus described by Cænalis, de Re Gallica, 2. p. 4. Ora illa maritima quam appellant Vallesdunæ in Oximensi agro Gulielmi nothi victoria adversus Wido-nem Burgundionum comites filium memorabilis. In the Chronicle of Normandy it is said to be three leagues from Caen, v. *Receuil des Hist.* Tom. 11. p. 333, where also see a curious description of the place from the Roman du Rom.

hard to root up the paganism which still lingered about the diocese of Coutances. Having received a command from God to build a monastery, he one morning mounted his ass and journeyed up to Paris, where his sanctity awed the mind of the savage Frankish king Childebert, so that he came back to Coutances with a grant of land at Nanteuil. Here on the borders of that stormy sea, which was not so wild as the men whom he had to rule, he built his Abbey. He would sometimes retire into a lonely island off the coast, which still bears his name, to serve God in solitude ; still, however, he was always to be found on the mainland whenever the service of God called him thither. To him then Helier repaired, and on the day of our Lord's nativity, in the Church of St. Mary, his soul was washed in the healing waters of baptism. For this Helier had longed with a patient longing, day and night, and now that he was born anew to Christ, he rejoiced with an unfeigned joy. He knew that God could overstep the bounds which He has set to Himself, and by a special grace keep from sin the soul of the unbaptized, if he has the desire of baptism ; but he also knew that regeneration, the proper gift of the gospel, was only given through the channel of baptism. Nay, though his body had been endued with virtue so as to heal the sick, yet this was nothing to him, as long as his soul lacked that illumination which is given by water and the Spirit. As then Cornelius, though the external gifts of the Holy Ghost had fallen upon him, was baptized, so was Helier brought to the holy font after so many years of waiting.

For three months he remained with Marculfus, but he longed to be at work and to carry out the crucifixion *by which he had been crucified with Christ.* He

begged of his new spiritual guide to point him out some lonely spot, where he could remain serving Christ with prayers and spiritual songs day and night. Woods and caves there were in plenty, where he might take up his abode ; there was the old forest of Scissay, in the heart of which was still a pagan temple, where the savage people worshipped. But Marculfus sent him to live in a wilder spot than this. The Abbot of Nanteuil had so much to do on the mainland of the Cotentin, that he could not as yet take into the range of his labours the many islets which lie on that wild coast. The cluster now called the Channel Islands, was then a sort of legendary ground, a vague and shifting spot, on the verge of Christendom, and as yet untouched by the faith of Christ. Thither he sent Helier, and with him a priest named Romardus, to show the people of the islands what Christians were. They had not very far to sail from France to Jersey, for the islands were probably nearer to the mainland than they are now, such changes have the waves caused on the Norman coast. What is now St. Michael's bay, was then a large forest, and the people of Guernsey still have stories to tell about the time when their island and the little isle of Herm were one. The place to which they first came was Augia,⁴ for that is the

⁴ The author of the Acts of Helier calls the island Agna, which is an evident mistake for Augia, a word derived from the German *aue*, a meadow. There is another isle of Augia, in the lake of Constance, and the word forms part of the name of no less than eight monasteries in the diocese of Constance. The German names of these places are all compounds of *aw*, or *aue*, which is a proof of the etymology assigned to this name for Jersey. There are places in Normandy with nearly or *entirely* the same name, as Augia, le pays d'Auge, and the *monastery of Augum* or Eu, called also B. Maria Augensis.

name which the Franks gave to Jersey on account of its green meadows and well-watered valleys. Theirs was in all likelihood the first Christian foot which touched the ground of the island. It was the last stronghold of the Celts, where dwelt a thin remnant of the old race which the Franks had conquered. Here then in the old haunt of Druid rites, did Helier find himself, with the stone circles and the huge granite altars of a worn-out faith all around him.

And now how was he to set up the cross over these rude relics of an ancient world? He began by bearing it in his own flesh; he fasted and wept all day, and he sung psalms and kept his thoughts ever fixed on God and on all the wonders which Christ has wrought. No one who dwelt in king's houses, clad in soft raiment, could have hoped to win the hearts of the rough and simple feeders of cattle who dwelt on the island. It was the rude giant Christopher, says the legend, who bore the infant Jesus, with the globe and cross in his hand, across the swollen stream, and so by rough arts did Helier bring Christ over the fretful waves to these poor islanders. A common missionary might have preached to them for many a year in vain, but Helier certainly took no common way of teaching. He was to be the fore-runner of the faith of Christ, and so, like John the Baptist, he lived a supernatural life. The place of his abode was as dreary as the wilderness on the banks of the Jordan. About the middle of what is now St. Aubin's bay, two huge rocks jut into the sea, divided from each other by a dark chasm, and from the island by a sort of causeway. At high tide, however, the water rushes through this chasm, and completely surrounds the rocks which are thus at certain times wholly cut off from the shore and from each other. On the

larger of these huge crags, may still be seen Helier's hermitage.⁵ It is a rough pile of stones, built on a ledge of the shelving rock, which itself forms one side and the floor of the building. On the side nearest the sea, the thick wall is pierced by an opening about as large as the narrow loophole of one of the many watch towers built on the headlands of the coast ; and through this, every wind that sweeps across the sea might whistle at will. In a corner of this dreary abode, there is a hole in the rock, now worn smooth, probably by the monks and pilgrims of after times, and here, as tradition says, did Helier stretch his limbs during the few hours which he gave to sleep. For this dreary place he gave up his father's palace ; and if any one is tempted to ask why he took all this trouble, I would bid him wait till the end of my story, and he will know.

The people of the island soon found out Helier ; it did not require a long train of thought to make out that he was a man of God ; and two cripples, one a paralytic, and the other a lame man, came to him, and by the help of our blessed Lord he healed them. The simple chronicler who has written the acts of our Saint, has by chance here put in a few words which mark the spot of the miracle. He says that those people healed by Helier left the mark of their footsteps on the rock ; now it happens that till a few years ago,

⁵ It is possible that the building which is now on the spot where Helier lived, was afterwards built by the monks, and this must be decided by a person learned in architecture. To a common observer it bears the marks of the highest antiquity, and is not at all unlike the very ancient chapel called the Pauline, in the island of Guernsey. At all events it would only make St. Helier's hermitage indefinitely more austere if even *this rude building was wanting.*

there were in a part of the island not far from his cell, some strange marks, like the print of feet upon a hard rock on the sea-shore. No one could tell whether they were cut out by the hand of man, or were rude basins worked out by the sea in a fantastic form. The poor people of the island in after times told another tale about these footsteps. They said that the blessed Virgin had once appeared there, and had left the mark of her feet upon the rock, and a small chapel was built upon the spot.⁶ Now it may be that these mysterious marks were neither left by the poor men whom Helier healed, nor yet by that holy Virgin ; but still let us not despise the simple tales of the peasantry ; there is very often some truth hidden beneath them. Thus in this case, we know that a long time after Helier's death, the people of the island still had stories to tell about his miracles, and loved to connect with him whatever appeared mysterious in their wild coast. Again the rough Celtic name⁷ of the man whom Helier healed, grating unmusically in the midst of a Norman legend, shows that the tale belonged to an earlier age ; so that it is very likely that this story contains traces of a real miracle done by God through Helier's hand. No one need pity the poor peasants for their faith. He alone is to be pitied who thinks all truth fable and all fable truth, and thus mistakes the fantastic freaks of the tide of man's opinion for the truth itself, which is founded on that rock which bears the print of our Lord's ever-blessed footsteps.

⁶ The spot here meant is still called *Le Havre des Pas*. The rock and the ruins of the chapel have been lately blown up, to procure stone for the building of a fort.

⁷ *Ascretillus*.

Helier had lived three years on his barren rock, when at length Marculfus found time to come and visit Jersey. The object of Marculfus in coming to the island was most likely to build a monastery there ; for that had been found to be the only way of spreading light among the benighted people. Many an idol had still to be cut down by the zealous hand of a Saint ; Brittany and the islands on its coast were especially a debatable ground between Christianity and heathenism. The lives of the Saints of the period are full of stories which show the belief that evil beings still dwelt in the wild caves and forests of the country. Strange tales of wonderful voyages and of dragons destroyed by holy men are mingled with the Acts of the Saints.⁸ And indeed we cannot tell how great may have been the power of the Evil one on his own ground in a heathen country, where he and his angels were worshipped, nor how much strength the Saints put forth to drive him out. At all events, it was found that the only way to root idolatry out of the hearts of the people, was to advance into the devil's ground and to plant an abbey in that forest where was an idol's temple. Many a monastery has become the head quarters of religion in the spot which was the seat of Druids ; and many a hermit has won the veneration of the people by dwelling alone in some place which the fisherman and the peasant scarce durst approach, because it was be-

⁸ V. Acts of S. S. Sampson and Maclovius. In the former of these traces are found of something very like second sight, and of an antagonist power granted to a Christian Abbot, v. p. 166 and 177. Acta S. S. Ben. vol. 1. Stories seem to have connected St. Maclovius with Brendan's famous voyage ; but little credit however is given to them by the author of the Acts. *Ibid*, p. 218.

lieved to be haunted. This was visibly setting up the cross of Christ in triumph above the powers of wickedness. Often again the monastery arose around the hut of the hermit, whose holiness had drawn disciples around him. Again about this time St. Maur and his Benedictines arrived in France,⁹ and were favoured by Childebert, the same king who had granted Nanteuil to St. Marculfus. All this had raised high the monastic order in France, and makes it the more likely that St. Marculfus meant Helier to be the Abbot of a monastery which was to be the centre of religion in the Channel Islands. He looked upon himself as a missionary going to evangelize men of Celtic race ; when he took leave of his weeping brethren at Nanteuil, he said, "Brethren, mourn not for me, I pray you, for if I live I will not delay to return to you ; but I must preach the word of God in other places, for therefore am I sent." Accompanied then by one of his priests, he went, say his Acts, "into the region of the Britons." Helier received him with joy. St. Marculfus, however, hardly knew his young disciple, so much was his countenance changed by his devotional exercises and his hard life. The cold west wind blows all across the Atlantic, often in boisterous weather forcing the waves with a peculiar hollow sound upon the rocky headlands, and through the narrow entrances of the many bays around the island ; and it had done sad havoc with Helier's slender form and weather-beaten face. Long did they speak together in the little hermitage on the rock. The same old chronicler has told us what they spoke about ; they related what God's grace had done for them, and how He had given them power to foil the devil, who had

⁹ St. Maur came into France about 543.

tried to hurt their souls in this lonely place. All their joy was in the triumph of the cross and in the advance of Christ's kingdom.

St. Marculfus however could not remain long with him ; very little is known about his labours in the island and how far he succeeded in converting them. He however probably did not do much, for some cause which is not on record soon took him back to the mainland. A few days however before he went, God enabled him by his prayers to do a signal service to the poor islanders. Romardus was one day looking forth on the wide waste of waters which surround the island, and I dare say his eyes often turned to the mainland of France, where the diocese of Coutances lay in the distance, and where now a sharp eye may faintly trace the outline of the western towers of its cathedral. He suddenly saw a vessel veering round one of the headlands which stretch into the sea, and soon after there appeared a whole fleet scudding before the wind and entering, their white sails filled with the breeze, into the broad bay of St. Aubin's. On a nearer approach he could see the fatal standard of the White Horse, which betokened a Saxon fleet. It was very likely a part of the band of adventurers which was at that time spreading havoc on the shore of England. Romardus was dreadfully alarmed at the sight ; the poor people of the island were far too few in number to resist this armed host. They were a peaceful race, engaged in feeding the cattle for which the verdant valleys of the island were famous, and utterly unable to fight these iron Saxons.¹ Romardus went to Helier's cell, and they both together went to Marculfus. He bade them

¹ *Divites pecoribus et aliis opibus.*

be of good cheer, and all three threw themselves upon their knees on the top of the bare crag, and prayed to God to turn away these blood-thirsty heathens from the islands which were ready to receive the cross. The prayer of a righteous man is very strong. Some of the Saxon keels had already touched the strand, when there gathered a black cloud in the heavens, and the sea began to boil up fearfully, as any one who has seen the white waves dashing on that coast can well believe. In a short time the wrath of God had scattered the heathen fleet ; some of the vessels were dashed against each other ; others were swallowed up by the waves, or broken in pieces against the many rocks which encircle that iron-bound coast. The men of the island had crowded up to St. Marculfus to beg of him to pray to his God for them ; they were but thirty men in number,* but the Saint, pointing to the few Saxons who had landed, made the sign of the cross over these trembling islanders, and bade them be of good cheer, for God had given these savage plunderers into their hands. And so it fell out, for the Saxons, dismayed by the death or dispersion of their companions, and by the unexpected resistance, became an easy prey. Three days after this happened, Marculfus crossed over to France, taking Romardus with him, but still leaving one of his disciples in the island to be Helier's spiritual guide. He probably meant to return as soon as affairs on the continent would allow him. St. Marculfus how-

* The old Acts of St. Marculfus say : *fertur etiam-que a multis asseritur nonplus triginta incolarum temporibus illis in hac insula demorari.* As he is talking of the men capable of bearing arms, this would make about thirty families. The same number is repeated in the later Acts, and in St. Helier's Life, except that the latter says, *triginta promiscui sexus.*

ever never again saw Helier in the flesh, though they probably finished their earthly pilgrimage about the same time ;³ it was God's will that a man of another race should found the first monastery in the Channel Islands, and the Abbot of Nanteuil was never again able to visit Jersey.⁴

For twelve long years after his spiritual father had left him did Helier dwell on his barren rock. His scanty history does not tell us expressly what he did, nor whether he with his companion converted the islanders to the Christian faith. His life is hid with Christ in God. We are however told minutely how at last he fell asleep, after his short but toilsome life. One night when he was resting on his hard couch, our blessed Lord for whom he had given up all things, appeared to him in a vision, and smiling upon him, said, "Come to me, my beloved one ; three days hence, thou shalt depart from this world with the adornment of thine own blood." In the morning his spiritual guide came to him, as he always did at the hour when the sea then,⁵ as now, left bare the causeway between the land and the rock where he dwelt. Helier then related to him the vision which he had seen to his great grief, for he at once saw that the end of his young disciple was near. On the third

³ St. Marculfus was ordained priest at thirty, and after this had time to found an abbey, and evangelize a district, before St. Helier knew him. Their acquaintance had lasted fifteen years when St. Helier died. Their deaths could not therefore have been much apart, and are generally placed about 558.

⁴ The Acts of St. Marculfus mention that he converted many of the inhabitants of the island ; as however he appears to have remained but a short time in the island, it seems likely that Helier and the person whom his Acts call his *pædagogus*, and who was probably a priest, really made these converts.

⁵ Diluculo, recedente mari.

day Helier arose from his bed of rock, and looked out upon the sea. A strong south-west wind was blowing, and he saw that the sea was covered with ships running before the breeze into the bay of St. Aubin's. He knew that a fleet of Saxons was at hand, and his heart told him that this was the summons of his Lord, and that from these ruthless haters of Christianity he was to meet his death. He went back into his cell that he might die, as he had lived, in prayer. For some time his abode remained unknown, so like was it in colour to the grey cliff on which it was built. At last the cry or the flight of the sea-birds who shared the rock with Helier, called the attention of the 'pagans to the place, and they descried the cell perched on the edge and overhanging the tossing waves below. They were not long in climbing the cliff, and entering his rude abode. Neither silver nor gold was there to call forth their thirst for spoil, and they gazed for some time upon him, thinking him to be some poor madman. At length the truth probably flashed across the mind of one of these savages, that he was a Christian hermit, for he rushed up to him and cut off his head with his sword, and Helier immediately gave up his soul into the hands of his Lord, who had summoned him to appear before Him to receive the crown of martyrdom. Next morning his spiritual guide came down to the sea shore to cross over to the hermitage ; when however he came down to the beach, he saw lying on the sand the body of his young disciple. He did not know how it came there ; the tide might have floated it across the narrow channel between the hermitage rock and the mainland. But the head was resting so tranquilly on the breast between the two hands, and its features still smiling so sweetly, that he thought that God, to preserve the

body of the Saint from infidel hands, had endued the limbs with life to bear the head across to the shore. Bitterly did the master weep over the scholar ; he called him aloud by the name of father, well knowing that he had gained more from Helier than Helier from him. He feared much that his precious body should after all become the prey of the barbarians, and he bore it in his arms into a little vessel which was lying near. He laid his beloved burden upon the deck, and sat down near it, watching it as a mother would do her child. At length, however, exhausted with grief and anxiety, he fell asleep. How long he slept he knew not ; but when he awoke, he found himself on a coast which he had never seen. The vessel was swiftly gliding into a harbour, and men and women were standing on the shore, with their eyes fixed upon this strange sight, which they took for a phantom, a vessel driving on without sail or helmsman, its whole crew a sleeping man and a headless body. An invisible hand had unmoored the vessel, and angels had guided it through rapid current and past bristling rocks ; and it swam on alone over the surface of the sea, till it came safely to the harbour where the Saint was to rest. And when the Bishop of the place heard the story, he came down to the shore in his pontifical garments, and with incense and chaunting they bore the body in procession to the Church.⁶

But however this be, let us adore the wonderful ways of Christ our God, who snatched this brand from the burning to which by the wickedness of his parents

⁶ The Acts of St. Helier are so confused, that it is impossible to make out what is the place here meant. The abbey of Beaubee, in Normandy, possessed some of the relics of St. Helier.

he seemed to be born. He in His great goodness bade this beautiful flower spring from a rude stock, and spread the sweet odour of His name in these distant isles. He brought this son of a Frankish chieftain out of his father's palace all across France, to die at the hands of men of his race, in an attempt to teach His faith to the poor remnant of the Celtic race in this lonely island. Vague and dim is the Christianity of this cluster of isles in those early times, when it is uncertain whether they belonged to Dol or to Coutances.⁷ But St. Helier is the first Christian on record

⁷ It is certain that in Norman times they were in the see of Coutances, and this in itself makes it probable that they were always a part of that diocese, for political changes do not seem to have affected the state of dioceses marked out by the Church, except by the consent of the Church. For instance, the parishes of St. Sampson, of Rupes, and Palus Warnerii, were always peculiars of the Bishop of Dol, though situated in the diocese of Rouen, because they had once belonged to St. Sampson's Abbey of Pentale, and that, though the Abbey itself was destroyed by the Normans.—Gall. Christ. Tom. xi. 120. Again, the Channel Islands themselves were never regularly transferred to an English diocese, though the see of Coutances was lost to the kings of England. A papal bull allowed ships to go freely to the islands in war time, apparently for the very purpose of allowing the Bishop of Coutances to cross over when he pleased. If then the islands had ever been in the diocese of Dol, it seems likely that they would never have been transferred. The only argument on the other side is, that Baldricus, Archbishop of Dol, asserts that these islands were given to St. Sampson, by king Childeburt. It may, however, be asked, whether an Archbishop of Dol in the twelfth century is very good authority for an event of the sixth, especially, it may be added, at the height of the dispute between Dol and Tours. Perhaps the most likely account is, that in the stormy times of the Franks, the islands never strictly formed part of any diocese; it is not on record that St. Sampson made a permanent establishment in

who strove to bend the stubbornness of the British race, and to turn them from the worship of the fountain and the rock to the faith of Christ. How many were converted by him we cannot tell, but at all events it was from him that they first gathered their ideas of the Christian faith. His fasts and his prayers and his innocent blood rose up before the Lord in behalf of all these islands. In after times, things were much changed in this little cluster of isles; they were no longer the same lonely spots as when Jersey had but thirty men who could bear arms, and Guernsey was a sacred island of Druids. In the many wars which the men of Brittany waged against each other or their neighbours, the isles were useful retreats for those of Celtic race. Dukes of Brittany, Frankish counts, and native lords appear amongst them; and a Neustrian Abbot^s came thither as an envoy from Charlemagne. Rugged and stubborn was the Breton race, and loose was its allegiance to France, whether a long-haired Frank or a Carlovingian reigned at Paris. They could hardly bow before the awful majesty of Charlemagne, and the feeble princes of his race only calmed them by opposing them as a barrier to the Normans. In these stormy times of Brittany, the islands were homes to their brethren on the continent, and Saints of different race from Helier came there, so that they seemed destined to be torn from Coutances, the see which had sent him forth. About the very time when St. Marculfus died, St. Sampson came to Jersey with his cousin

them, though he certainly preached as a missionary in at least one of them, apparently Alderney, and probably in more, v. Act. S. S. Ben. Tom. 1. p. 184; and St. Maglorius had resigned *his bishoprick* when he crossed over to Jersey.

^s V. Neustria Pia. p. 155.

Judael, a prince of British blood. Shortly after came St. Maglorius, who healed the Frankish count Loyesco of his leprosy, and to him was given half the island, rich in woodlands and in fisheries. Here he built a fair Abbey, where dwelt sixty monks ; in his day the faith of Christ sunk deep into the minds of the islanders, for the poor fishermen who in their frail barks had to wrestle with that stormy sea, loved him well, and willingly brought their fish to the Abbey, whose vassals they were. Long afterwards they told how St. Maglorius was kind to them, so that when one of them was drowned, the Saint wept sore, and vowed a vow never to eat fish again ; and when evening came, he with all the monks went down to the shore chaunting litanies ; then he threw himself upon the sandy beach, and God heard his prayer, and was pleased to restore the dead man to life. In Guernsey too,⁹ the Saint healed the daughter of the native chieftain, and a field there, where once stood a chapel of which he was the patron, is still called after his name. All this seemed to show that another race than that of Helier was to

⁹ *Bissargia insula eidem Sargiæ vicina, dives opum atque frugum, a quodam viro nobili, qui vocabatur Nivo, jure hæreditario tenebatur. Act. S. S. Ben. Sæc. I. vita St. Maglorii 29.* The author goes on to speak of the numerous ploughs and vessels of the island, which description agrees much better with Guernsey than with the far smaller island of Sark. A learned friend in the Channel Islands, to whom these pages are much indebted, has suggested that Bissargia or Ve-sargia, is a Celtic diminutive, implying a larger Sargia. That the Sargia of the Acts is Jersey, is proved from its being called Javarsiacum, v. Ann. Ben. ii. 655. Guernsey, as being the smaller island, might therefore be called Bissargia. It is, however, very probable that the names of these small islands may have been confounded in those early times.

possess the Channel Islands ; many of the numberless clear fountains in the islands are still called after Breton Saints, and many of the little chapels which once studded the green valleys which run up and down through the whole country, were dedicated to those favourite patrons of the spot. The islands, with the entire Cotentin, were formally given up to Brittany when Charles the Bold gave to Salomon, a Celtic prince, the golden circlet of a king. But after being bandied about from Frank to Celt, the isles were finally gained by William, second duke of Normandy, whose long sword was used to settling accounts between Brittany and France. Then came the time when churches and chapels were dedicated in the names of St. Mary and St. George, instead of St. Sampson and St. Anne, the patron saints of Brittany. Then was Guernsey really the Holy Isle, when St. Michael's Abbey arose on the hillock where the huge granite altar of the Druids still remains to show how the blessed Archangel has triumphed over Satan ; and there also in times of Norman rule was built the nunnery of St. Mary of Lihou, in passing whose islet even now French vessels vail their topmast, though only the ruins exist. Then too it becomes clearer that through all these changes the name of St. Helier had not been forgotten. The Church of Coutances, which on the 16th of July celebrates the feast of the youthful martyr, was now without doubt the see to which the Channel Islands belonged. Even when the Celtic names lingered only in the lonely places of nature, and the Norman manors of St. Ouen, Anneville, and Saumarez, showed that the soil was possessed by lords of a different race, still St. Helier was remembered. A monastery was founded afterwards by William Fitz-Hamon, a Norman nobleman,

on the fellow rock to that on which he lived, where Elizabeth castle now stands ; and the rude steps which lead to his hermitage are even now to be seen worn by the steps of pilgrims in former times. There now appear faint marks on the wall, as if the monks of St. Helier had done their best to adorn it with frescoes, and to turn it into a small chapel by raising an altar in it. Well might they be grateful to him, for he sanctified the island with his blood. Not only Jersey, but the whole of the little group of islands was benefitted by him, for he first, as far as records tell us, crossed, in the character of a servant of Christ, the stormy sea which divides them from the mainland ; and the Abbot of St. Michael, when every third year he bore the Holy Sacrament, on Corpus Christi-day, through a great part of Guernsey, might bless the memory of Helier, whose blood had first made Christ known to these lonely islands. Even now many a peasant in the two largest islands of the Norman cluster, bears the name of the Saint, though he most probably has forgotten him to whom in great part he owes it that he is a Christian.

HISTORY OF
St. Herbert,

HERMIT ON DERWENTWATER.

A. D. 687. c.

It is not to be expected that much information should remain to us respecting one whose aim when on earth had been to retire from the world and to be unknown. Such is the case of St. Herbert, a Priest and Confessor, who in the latter part of the seventh century led a solitary life on one of the islands of Derwentwater, which still bears his name.

He is known to us only through his connexion with St. Cuthbert, to whom he was long united by the ties of religious friendship ; and all the records which remain of his life are contained in the Histories of that Saint. One, a life supposed to be written by a contemporary monk of Lindisfarne : the others, by the venerable Bede ; first, a metrical history, principally of his miracles, in Latin hexameters, in which as we might expect, there is a poetical freedom in reporting the words of the Saints ; a later and more full and exact life, from which the narrative we are interested in, is repeated almost in the same words, in the account of *St. Cuthbert*, in the Ecclesiastical History, agreeing

also in substance, though more detailed and accurate than the relation of the same event by the earlier writer.

St. Herbert is described as a Priest, venerable for the goodness of his life and character ; and, whilst his friendship with St. Cuthbert of itself indicates his sanctity, he is even said by the biographers of that Saint, to have almost equalled him in holiness during life, and from the chastening of a long and painful illness, to have attained at death to an equal degree of fitness for future glory. Yet St. Cuthbert became the object of general veneration ; Herbert was almost unknown ; for the one was called to positions of responsibility and public exertion, and endued with powers and gifts fitting him for them ; the other, so far as we know, led a retired life, and was unendued with extraordinary gifts.

Of St. Herbert's earlier history we know nothing. Their friendship makes it probable that he had previously lived where he had had frequent opportunities of intercourse with St. Cuthbert ; in the monastery (we might have supposed, but for the absence of any record of him) of Melrose or Lindisfarne, in which, previous to his retirement to solitude, St. Cuthbert's life had been spent, and over which he had successively presided ; whilst the expressions of submission used to him by Herbert fall in with the idea that he had been under his authority.

It was, as the metrical life informs us, from the advice of his spiritual friend and guide that he retired to the cell on Derwentwater ; and that he had previously been in a religious society, is confirmed by the circumstance that hermits usually were persons who had *spent some time in a monastery, and then, like*

St. Cuthbert, sought a life which seemed to afford opportunity for a more uninterrupted exercise of devotion and meditation. Some of the most holy men, however, and the greatest fathers of the Church, gave the preference to the life of monks in community, and did not approve of the change to solitude, as depriving a man of the opportunity of forming and exercising the graces of the Christian character, and of benefiting others by his gifts and labours. But, on the other hand, St. Athanasius, one of the most sober and judicious of them, and St. Jerome, the most accomplished, wrote the Lives of the first hermits, St. Antony and St. Hilarion. Perhaps we may say rightly that the eremitical life can never be properly attempted without a special divine inspiration, calling a man to it ; and then it is not simply allowable, but a duty. Even then it has often been found expedient not to adopt it without the preparatory discipline of a religious society, to learn self-control, severe hardihood in bearing with privations, humility, submission, and affectionate forgetfulness of self. That such a training had been gone through by St. Herbert, seems implied in his retirement being the consequence of the advice of St. Cuthbert, whose own life had been one of so much active exertion for the good of others ; and in the humility and affectionate submission which appear so strongly to have marked his character.

The retreat selected by him was a place secured from sudden or careless interruption, at the northern extremity of an island lying nearly in the centre of the Lake, which is almost five miles long and one and a half in width, and closely surrounded by mountains. The island itself is somewhat less than five acres in *extent*, and apparently unproductive. The sound of

the waterfalls on shore may be heard from it, swelling soft or loud as borne upon the wind, and it is the very spot which would be chosen by one who wished from one station to study the whole circumference of the Lake and the hills around it. At the same time the low level of its position excludes from view the richer flat grounds which adjoin the Lake, leaving only the more wild and dreary portions of the scene.

It is often remarked that situations of great natural beauty were selected by those who adopted the solitary life ; as though the religious mind felt a sympathy with the beauty of the natural objects which surrounded it, as at all times it has delighted to raise up the forms of grace and sublimity in works of art. And yet it seems perhaps more in harmony with the ascetic life to suppose that, though not indifferent to those beauties and unconsciously influenced by them, and willing to speak of them to others, the solitary would rather in his own thoughts recur to the words which reminded him of the time when all these things would be destroyed ; and even when he most rejoiced in them, it would be as suggesting the new and more glorious world to which they would give place. "What need to tell," says St. Basil of his own hermitage, "of the exhalations from the earth, or the breezes from the river ? Another might admire the multitude of flowers and singing birds, but leisure I have none for such thoughts."

We shall, however, form an inadequate idea of the self-denial of St. Herbert, unless we call to mind the condition of the country to which he retired. It was then occupied by a part of the Cymry, the remains of the British tribes, and formed one of their petty kingdoms. They were indeed subject to the Saxons, but foreigners in language and habits, and separated by the

most bitter hostility. Each nation regarded the other as worse than heathen, and exercised the greatest cruelties towards them. Their Churches were not in communion, and their common faith was forgotten. The Britons in this country are said to have been ecclesiastically subject to St. Kentigern's see of Glasgow, but they seem now to have been in a very ignorant, irreligious, and almost barbarous condition. Nay, a portion of them in the wilds of Cumberland, were actually pagan. The Roman occupation of that district, being for the mere purpose of a Frontier against the Picts or Caledonians, had never opened a way for the general conversion and instruction of the inhabitants. Even the professed Christians seem to have mingled heathen customs and usages with their Christianity. It was for a wild country with such inhabitants, who would look on a Saxon as a natural enemy, that Herbert exchanged the society of his countrymen, and the intercourse and sympathy of those Religious Houses which were the seats of piety and brotherly love, and the peaceful reward of labour and study. From the difficulties and trials thus incurred, he gained a special right to the title of Confessor by which he is designated in the Martyrologies.

One tie however was retained, in a yearly meeting with St. Cuthbert, with whom he then conferred as to his religious state, communicating his failings and infirmities, and receiving directions and advice respecting his everlasting well-being. A similar yearly visit is said to have been made by St. Bega to St. Hilda ; and we seem to have a parallel in later times in the friendship of our own Hooker and Saravia, so beautifully described by Walton, who says they were supposed to be *Confessors to each other*. And such instances suggest the

means of a perfection of friendship among Christians which otherwise could not exist. An unreserved confidence being allowed, under circumstances so sacred as to preclude the danger of familiarly speaking of our faults, and producing the affectionate trust which arises from the thought that all our known wrong doings and failings have been confessed to one who yet loves us and sympathises with us. St. Cuthbert had a singular power of thus influencing others, as Bede states, in speaking of his preaching.

It was probably in the latter part of the year 686, that the last interview of these holy friends took place on earth. And this is the occasion of the mention of St. Herbert in Bede's history, as being an instance of the foreknowledge of the time of his death, vouchsafed to St. Cuthbert.

The Saint had now been more than a year Bishop of Lindisfarne, and was making a second visit to Carlisle, which, with the country fifteen miles round it, had been given him by Egfrid, king of Northumbria. His former visit had been abruptly terminated by the death of the king, and he now returned, at the request of the brethren of his monastery there, to ordain Priests, and to give the religious habit and his benediction to Ermenburga, the widow of Egfrid, who was retiring to the Religious Society at Carlisle, over which her sister presided.

Here, according to his yearly practice, St. Herbert met him, desiring, by his wholesome exhortations, to be more and more inflamed in his affection for heavenly objects. After prayer, as was their rule, whilst they were communing on spiritual subjects and (to adhere to the language of the venerable Bede) were mutually inebriating each other with draughts of heavenly life,

St. Cuthbert desiring (as the metrical Life relates) that that day, on which they had been mercifully allowed to meet again, should be spent in the delights of holy converse, said, among other things, "Remember at this time, my brother Herbert, to ask and say to me all you wish ; for after our parting now we shall not again see each other with the eyes of the flesh in this world ; for I know that the time of my departure is at hand, and that I must shortly put off this tabernacle."

On this Herbert, falling at his feet, with groans and tears, said, "For our Lord's sake, I beseech you not to leave me, but remember your most faithful companion, and entreat the mercy of Heaven, that we, who have together served Him on earth, may pass together to behold His grace and glory in the heavens. You know I have always studied to live according to your direction, and if from ignorance or infirmity I have in any point failed, I have taken pains to chastise and amend my fault according to the decision of your will."

The Bishop bent in prayer, and being immediately informed by the Spirit that his request was granted, said, "Rise up, my brother, and do not mourn, but rather rejoice greatly, for the mercy of Heaven has granted what we asked."

They separated,—St. Cuthbert to his See, which he shortly afterwards resigned, and retired for the few remaining months of his life to the cell in the island of Farne, which he inhabited before his consecration. Herbert to his island. The event verified the promise and prediction. After this separation, they never again saw each other with the eyes of the body, but on one and the same day, nay, at one and the same hour—on Wednesday, the twentieth of March, 687, their spirits *departing from the body*, were immediately united in

the blessed vision of each other, and by the ministry of angels translated together to the kingdom of Heaven. Herbert, however, as Bede relates, was prepared by long previous illness, from an appointment, we may suppose, of Divine mercy, that in whatever degree he fell short of the merits of the blessed Cuthbert, this might be supplied by the chastening pains of lengthened sickness ; so that equalling the grace of him who had interceded for him, they might, as they had at one and the same time departed from the body, be fitted to be received into one undistinguished dwelling of everlasting bliss.

Seven centuries had almost passed away, and the remembrance of at least this event of St. Herbert's life was lost in the country where he had died : for he was a stranger, and under the alternate dominion of England and Scotland, the people had changed their language and habits, and were still in a poor and illiterate condition, when, A.D. 1374, the then Bishop of Carlisle, Thomas de Appleby, issued a mandate for the yearly commemoration of this event.

He states that in reading sacred books he had met with this narrative in Bede's History, and, conceiving that few if any were acquainted with it, "In order that men might not be ignorant of what the Lord had vouchsafed to reveal for the glory of His Saints," he appointed that on the anniversary of their death, the Vicar of Crosthwaite, the parish in which the Lake lies, should proceed to St. Herbert's Isle, and there celebrate with full chaunting the Mass of St. Cuthbert ; adding an Indulgence of forty days to all who should on that day repair thither for devotion in honour of St. Cuthbert, and in remembrance of Herbert. "What a happy holyday must that have been for all these vales"

says a gifted writer lately taken from us ; “and how joyous on a fine spring day must the Lake have appeared with boats and banners from every chapelry !... and how must the Chapel have adorned that little isle, giving a human and religious character to the solitude !”¹

The remains of a building are still visible among the wood with which the island is covered, “making the island,” adds Southey, “mere wilderness as it has become, more melancholy.” Hutchinson, the Historian of Cumberland, describes it in his time, fifty years ago, as appearing to consist of two apartments, the outer one about twenty-two feet by sixteen, which probably had been the chapel ; the other, of narrower dimensions, the cell. Of this smaller room the traces are almost lost : the walls of the other remain to the height of about three feet from the ground, built in the simple way of the country, of unwrought slaty stones and mortar ; heaps of stones from the building are lying around, and all are now overgrown with ivy, moss, and brambles, and clasped by the roots of trees which have grown upon them.

It is in a state befitting the simplicity and unassuming character of so meek a Saint, who wished to be withdrawn from public notice, and to be little thought of, and whose wishes were fulfilled after death, as in life. His name would have been unreported in history, except to show the greatness of the revelations made to his friend. It was in honour of St. Cuthbert that the mass was said in the chapel of his isle, and the very document which appoints it abstains from giving him the title of Saint, which is uniformly added to

¹ Southey's Colloquies, vol. ii. p. 35.

the name of Cuthbert : and Herbert is remembered that St. Cuthbert may be honoured.

His name was added to the Martyrology of Usuardus, in Greven's edition, A.D. 1516 to 1521. It is given by Canisius in the German Martyrology, and by Ferrarius in his General Catalogue—following an English Martyrology.

Since in this age we cannot join the yearly pageant on his island, we will keep memory of him in the words of a poet, who is his neighbour, and who has written this inscription for the spot where was his hermitage :—

If thou in the dear love of some one Friend
Hast been so happy that thou knowest what thoughts
Will sometimes in the Happiness of Love
Make the heart sink, then wilt thou reverence
This quiet spot : and, Stranger ! not unmoved
Wilt thou behold this shapeless heap of stones,
The desolate ruins of St. Herbert's cell.
Here stood his threshold ; here was spread the roof
That sheltered him, a self-secluded Man,
After long exercise in social cares
And offices humane, intent to adore
The Deity, with undistracted mind,
And meditate on everlasting things
In utter solitude.—But he had left
A Fellow-labourer, whom the good Man loved
As his own soul. And, when with eye upraised
To heaven he knelt before the crucifix,
While o'er the Lake the cataract of Lodore
Pealed to his orisons, and when he paced
Along the beach of this small isle and thought
Of his Companion, he would pray that both

(Now that their earthly duties were fulfilled)
Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain
So prayed he :—as our Chronicles report,
Though here the Hermit numbered his last day,
Far from St. Cuthbert, his beloved Friend,
Those holy Men both died in the same hour.*

* Wordsworth's Poems, i. 299. ed. 1832.

HISTORY OF
St. Edelwald,

HERMIT AT FARNE,

A. D. 700. .

THERE is a small island off the coast of Northumberland, by name Farne, seven miles to the south of the famous Holy Island, or Lindisfarne, and at the distance of two miles from the mainland. It is encompassed by a girdle of rocks, and once contained in it a mound of a circular form, in which there lay a spot of ground about seventy feet across, and to which St. Bede, in a passage presently to be quoted, gives the name of "heights," and Camden that of "fortress." Here St. Cuthbert lived a solitary life between his sojourn in the monastery, and his elevation to the see, of Lindisfarne ; hither had he come to die ; here, according to some accounts, he was originally buried. We are accustomed to consider a hermitage as a rural retreat in a wood, or beside a stream ; a wild pretty spot, where the flowers fill the air with sweetness, and the birds with melody. So it often was ; and hard indeed it should not be so. Hermits have privations enough without being cut off from the sight of God's own world, the type of glories unseen. However, otherwise thought St. Cuthbert : accordingly he so contrived the wall which circled round his inclosure, as to see nothing

out of doors, but the blue sky or the heavy clouds over his head.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage ;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.

Such was the sentiment of a soldier of this world ; the great combatants for the next have fulfilled it more literally as well as more religiously. Edelwald succeeded Cuthbert in this uninviting abode. He had been for many years a monk of Ripon, where St. Wilfred had founded a religious house, and afterwards was buried. Felgeld succeeded Edelwald, and was an old man of seventy in Bede's time, who perhaps on his information has recorded the following anecdote of the Saint in his metrical account of St. Cuthbert's miracles. After mentioning St. Cuthbert and Felgeld, he proceeds :—

Between these comrades dear,
Zealous and true as they,
Thou, prudent Ethelwald, didst bear,
In that high home the sway.

A man, who ne'er, 'tis said,
Would of his graces tell,
Or with what arms he triumphed
Over the Dragon fell.

So down to us hath come
A memorable word,
Which in unguarded season from
His blessed lips was heard.

It chanced that as the Saint
Drank in with faithful ear
Of Angel tones the whispers faint,
Thus spoke a brother dear :

“ O why so many a pause
Thwarting thy words' full stream,
Till her dark line Oblivion draws
Across the broken theme ?”

He answered, “ Till thou seal
To sounds of earth thine ear,
Sweet friend, be sure thou ne'er shalt feel
Angelic voices near.”

But then the Hermit blest
A sudden change came o'er ;
He shudders, sobs, and smites his breast,
Is mute, then speaks once more.

“ O by the Name Most High,
What I have now let fall,
Hush, till I lay me down to die,
And go the way of all !”

Thus did a Saint in fear
His gifts celestial hide ;
Thus did an Angel standing near
Proclaim them far and wide.

Bede adds that in this respect Edelwald presented a remarkable contrast to St. Cuthbert ; who when commemorating the trials of Christians in former ages, was also in the habit of stating to others the sufferings and

graces wrought in himself by the mercy of Christ ;¹ “thus,” he observes, “the One Spirit adorned the two men with distinct gifts, and led them on to one kingdom by a different path.”

St. Cuthbert’s hermitage, though sufficiently well contrived to keep out the view of the sea and rocks, and of the cliffs of the neighbouring land, was not equally impervious to wind and water, which are of a ruder nature, and intrude themselves into places where the refined sense of sight and its delicate visions cannot enter. The planks of his cottage parted, and let in the discomforts of the external world without its compensations. The occurrence which grew out of this circumstance brings together the three successive inmates of the place, Cuthbert, Edelwald, and Felgeld, in a very sacred way ; and as it comes to us on good evidence, viz. the report of Bede from the mouth both of Felgeld, and of a common friend of Felgeld and himself, it shall here be given as he has recorded it.²

“Nor do I think,” says Venerable Bede, “I ought to omit the heavenly miracle which the Divine mercy showed by means of the ruins of the holy oratory, in which the venerable father went through his solitary warfare in the service of the Lord. Whether it was effected by the merits of the same blessed father Cuthbert, or his successor Ethelwald, a man equally devoted to the Lord, the Searcher of the heart knows best. There is no reason why it may not be attributed to either of the two, in conjunction with the faith of the

¹ At pia Cuthbertus memorans sæpe acta priorum
Ætheriâ sub laude, sui quoque Christus agonis
Ut fuerat socius, suerat subnectere paucis.

² *In vit. St. Cuthb.* In the extracts which follow, Dr. Giles’s translation is used with some trifling variations.

most holy father Felgeld ; through whom and in whom the miraculous cure, which I mentioned, was effected. He was the third person who became tenant of the same place and its spiritual warfare, and, at present more than seventy years old, is awaiting the end of this life, in expectation of the heavenly one.

“ When therefore God’s servant Cuthbert had been translated to the heavenly kingdom, and Ethelwald had commenced his occupation of the same island and monastery, after many years spent in conversation with the monks, he gradually aspired to the rank of anchoritic perfection. The walls of the aforesaid oratory, being composed of planks somewhat carelessly put together, had become loose and tottering by age, and, as the planks separated from one another, an opening was afforded to the weather. The venerable man, whose aim was rather the splendour of the heavenly than of an earthly mansion, having taken hay, or clay, or whatever he could get, had filled up the crevices, that he might not be disturbed from the earnestness of his prayers by the daily violence of the winds and storms. When Ethelwald entered and saw these contrivances, he begged the brethren who came thither to give him a calf’s skin, and fastened it with nails in the corner, where himself and his predecessor used to kneel or stand when they prayed, as a protection against the storm.

“ Twelve years after, he also ascended to the joys of the heavenly kingdom, and Felgeld became the third inhabitant of the place. It then seemed good to the right reverend Eadfrid, bishop of the Church of Lindisfarne, to restore from its foundation the time-worn oratory. This being done, many devout persons begged of Christ’s holy servant Felgeld, to give them a small *portion of the relics of God’s servant Cuthbert, or of*

Ethelwald, his successor. He accordingly determined to cut up the above-named calf's skin into pieces, and give a portion to each. But he first experienced its influence in his own person ; for his face was much deformed by a swelling and a red patch. The symptoms of this deformity had become manifest long before to the monks, whilst he was dwelling among them. But now that he was living alone, and bestowed less care on his person, whilst he practised still greater rigidities, and, like a prisoner, rarely enjoyed the sun or air, the malady increased, and his face became one large red swelling. Fearing, therefore, lest he should be obliged to abandon the solitary life and return to the monastery ; presuming in his faith, he trusted to heal himself by the aid of those holy men whose house he dwelt in, and whose holy life he sought to imitate ; for he steeped a piece of the skin above mentioned in water, and washed his face therewith ; whereupon, the swelling was immediately healed, and the cicatrice disappeared. This I was told, in the first instance, by a religious priest of the monastery of Jarrow, who said that he well knew Felgeld's face to have been in the deformed and diseased state which I have described, and that he saw it and felt it with his hand through the window after it was cured. Felgeld afterwards told me the same thing, confirming the report of the priest, and asserting that his face was ever afterwards free from the blemish during the many years that he passed in that place. This he ascribed to the agency of the Almighty grace, which both in this world heals many, and in the world to come will heal all the maladies of our minds and bodies, and, satisfying our desires after good things, will crown us for ever with its mercy and compassion."

It is better to use a contemporary's words than our

own, where the former are attainable ; for this reason, I make a second quotation from the same revered writer who has furnished the above narrative. The passage occurs in the beginning of the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History :—

“The venerable Ethelwald,” he says, “who had received the priesthood in the monastery of Ripon, and had, by actions worthy of the same, sanctified his holy office, succeeded the man of God, Cuthbert, in the exercise of a solitary life, having practised the same before he was bishop, in the isle of Farne. For the certain demonstration of the life which he led, and his merit, I will relate one miracle of his, which was told me by one of these brothers for and on whom the same was wrought ; viz. Guthfrid, the venerable servant and priest of Christ, who afterwards, as abbot, presided over the brethren of the same church of Lindisfarne, in which he had been educated.

“‘I came,’ says he, ‘to the island of Farne, with two others of the brethren, to speak with the most reverend father, Ethelwald. Having been refreshed with his discourse, and taken his blessing, as we were returning home, on a sudden, when we were in the midst of the sea, the fair weather which was wafting us over was checked, and there ensued so great and dismal a tempest, that neither the sails nor oars were of any use to us, nor had we any thing to expect but death. After long struggling with the wind and waves to no effect, we looked behind us, to see whether it were practicable at least to recover the island from whence we came, but we found ourselves on all sides so enveloped in the storm, that there was no hope of escaping. But looking out as far as we could see, we observed, on the island of Farne, father Ethelwald, beloved of God, come out of his cavern to watch *our*

course ; for, hearing the noise of the storm and raging sea, he was come out to see what would become of us. When he beheld us in distress and despair, he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in prayer for our life and safety ; upon which, the swelling sea was calmed, so that the storm ceased on all sides, and a fair wind attended us to the very shore. When we had landed, and had dragged upon the shore the small vessel that brought us, the storm, which had ceased a short time for our sake, immediately returned, and raged continually during the whole day ; so that it plainly appeared that the brief cessation of the storm had been granted from Heaven, at the request of the man of God, in order that we might escape.’ ”

Edelwald lived twelve years in his (to human eyes) dreary and forlorn abode ; dreary and forlorn, most assuredly, if he had no companions, no converse, no subjects of thought, besides those which the external world supplied to him. On his death, A. D. 699 or 700, his remains were taken to Lindisfarne, and buried by the side of his master, St. Cuthbert. Here they remained for near two centuries, when the ravages of the Danes in the neighbourhood frightened the holy household ; and Erdulf, Bishop, and Edred, Abbot of Lindisfarne, migrated with the bodies of their saints to the mainland. For a hundred years, the sacred relics of Oswald, Aidan, Cuthbert, Bede, Edbert, Edfrid, Ethelwold, and Edelwald, had no settled habitation ; but on the transference of the see from Lindisfarne to Durham, at the end of the tenth century, they were brought home again, under the shadow of the new Cathedral. There they remained till the changes of the sixteenth century, when, with the relics of Cuthbert, Bede, Aidan, and the rest, they disappeared.

A LEGEND OF

St. Bettelin,

HERMIT, AND PATRON OF STAFFORD,

TOWARDS A. D. 800.

BRIGHT luminaries in the heavens, which guide the traveller across the desert, are found, when viewed through a glass, to be double stars, not single, though each seems to be one. Suns which reign separately in their separate systems, far apart from each other, mingle their rays, as we see them, and blend their colours, and are called by one name. They are confused, yet they are used by the wayfaring man, who is not hurt by his mistake.

So it is with the beacon light which the seaman dimly discerns from afar. It has no definite outline, and occupies no distinct spot in the horizon ; it cannot be located amid the haze and gloom, but it gives him direction and confidence.

So is it with his landmarks by day ; one, two, three high trees are set on a hill,—nay, when close, we can count a dozen, yet in the distance they look like one, nor can we persuade ourselves that they are many. What matters it to those who are tossing at sea, so long as they remind them of the green home which they are approaching, and shape their course towards it ?

And so with the herbs of the field ; we call them simples, and we use them in medicine as such, and they do certainly put disease and pain to flight. Yet they are compounded of many elements, and some of these, not the whole plant, is the true restorative. Often we do not know that this is the case ; but, even when we do, we are not nearer to the knowledge of what the healing element is, or how it may be detached and used separately. We cannot extract the true virtue of the medicine from the impure drug, and we think it better to administer it in combination with other elements which may be useless, or even inconvenient, than to wait till we can duly analyze it.

And to take a more sacred instance, and more closely connected with the subject to which these remarks are tending. It has before now happened, that profane or fanatical violence has broken in upon the relics of the Saints, and scattered them over land and water, or mixed them with the dust of the earth, or even with the mouldering bones of common men, nay of heretics and sinners. Yet could it not destroy the virtue of the relics ; it did but disperse and conceal them. They did *more*, they were seen *less*. What says St. Basil about the Forty Martyrs, who were burned, and whose relics were cast into the river, in the Licinian persecution ? “ These are they who have taken occupation of this our country, as a chain of fortresses, and secure her against hostile invasion, not throwing themselves upon one point, but quartered upon many homes and the ornament of many places.”

And what the malice of foes has done to the bodies of the Saints, the inadvertence or ignorance of friends has too often done to their memories. Through the twilight of ages,—in the mist of popular credulity or enthu-

siasm,—amid the ambitious glare of modern lights, darkening what they would illustrate,—the stars of the firmament gleam feebly and fitfully ; and we see a something divine, yet we cannot say what it is : we cannot say what, or where, or how it is, without uttering a mistake. There is no room for the exercise of reason—we are in the region of faith. We must believe and act, where we cannot discriminate ; we must be content to take the history as sacred on the whole, and leave the verification of particulars, as unnecessary for devotion, and for criticism impossible.

This applies of course in no small degree to the miraculous incidents which occur in the history of the Saints. “ Since what is extraordinary,” says Bollandus, “ usually strikes the mind and is impressed on the memory in an especial way, it follows that writers about the Saints at times have been able to collect together nothing but their miracles, their virtues and other heavenly endowments being altogether forgotten ; and these miracles, often so exaggerated or deformed (as the way of men is) with various adjuncts and circumstances, that by some persons they are considered as nothing short of old women’s tales. Often the same miracles are given to various persons ; and though God’s unbounded goodness and power certainly need not refuse this Saint the same favour which He has already bestowed upon that, (for He applies the same chastisements and punishments to the sins of various persons) yet what happened to one has often in matter of fact been attributed to others, first by word of mouth, then in writing, through fault of the faculty of memory, which is but feeble and easily confused in the case of the many ; so that when inquiries are made about a Saint, they attribute to him what they remem-

ber to have heard at some time of another, especially since the mind is less retentive of names than of things. In this way, then, while various writers at one and the same time have gone by popular fame, because there were no other means of information, it has come to pass that a story has been introduced into the history of various Saints, which really belongs to one only, and to him perhaps not in the manner in which it is reported.


“Moreover it often happens that, without denying that a certain miracle may have occurred, yet the occasion and mode of its occurrence, as reported, may reasonably create a doubt whether this particular condescension, be it to man’s necessity or his desire, became the majesty of the Eternal. At the same time, since His goodness is wonderful, and we are not able to measure either the good things which He has prepared in heaven for the holy souls He loves, or the extent of His favours towards them on earth, such narratives are not to be rejected at hazard, though they seem to us incredible ; but rather to be reverently received, in that they profess to issue from that Fountain of Divine goodness, from which all our happiness must be derived. Suppose the very things were not done ; yet greater things might have been done, and have been done at other times. Beware then of denying them on the ground that they could not or ought not to have been done.”

These remarks apply among others to St. Bettelin, whose brief history is now to be given, though miracles are not its characteristic. He is the Patron of the town of Stafford, where he was once held in great honour ; but little certain is known of him, *down to his very name*. Various writers speak of Bet-

telin, Beccelin, Barthelm, Bertelin ; whether he owned all these at once, or whether but some of them, whether a portion of his history belongs to another person, or whether it is altogether fabulous, is not known. A life of him has come down to us, which is attributed to Alexander, a Prior of Canons Regular of St. Augustine, in the beginning of the thirteenth century ; but, though this Prior is well spoken of, little credit can be placed in the letter of its statements. Two other writers, Ingulphus and Felix, contain incidental mention of him, which is more trustworthy. We will put these notices together, under the guidance of the learned Suyskin, the Bollandist.

Bettelin was a disciple of St. Guthlake's, in the eighth century, and one of four who followed him in a hermit's life, in the island of Croyland, on the southern border of Lincolnshire. Cissa had been a pagan, of noble blood and great in the world ; but had left all to follow Christ and St. Guthlake, and succeeded him as Abbot. Till the Danes came, he lay in a high marble tomb, on the right of his spiritual father in the Abbey of Croyland. Egbert was more in St. Guthlake's confidence than any of his brethren ; he may have been his confessor. Tatwin had formerly been ferryman at the passage from the mainland to the Island. These, with Bettelin, who made the fourth, and came nearer the Saint's person than the rest, lived in separate cottages, close to Guthlake's oratory and under his guidance. All this we learn from Ingulphus, himself Abbot of Croyland, towards the end of the eleventh century.

Something of a painful and a guilty nature hangs over the first years of Bettelin ; legend and history agree in testifying as much as this. It is sometimes




said that no story is without foundation ; and at any rate this maxim is so often true as to make it fair in a particular case to be biassed *primâ facie* by such reports as are in circulation, though in details or in the letter they may be simply untrue. Thus an alleged fact against a man's character may be clearly disproved, and yet may be the spontaneous result of a general and prevalent impression founded on real facts. A statesman may in his day be popularly considered timid, when he is but prudent, or crafty, when he is but far-seeing ; or a monarch indulgent and paternal, though he is weak ; or a commander cruel and relentless, because he is stern in manner and determined in purpose. Here is a basis of truth, and a superstructure of error. A rumour is spread that political parties are breaking up, or that some illustrious person is estranged, or that some foreign influence is at work in high places. It may be formally and totally and truly contradicted ; it may be possible to explain it, to show how it originated, to refer it to the malice or the impertinence of this or that individual : and yet, though not a truth, it may be the shadow of a truth, unsubstantial, yet attached to it, the exponent of facts which discover themselves in the event. And in like manner the author of a marvellous Life may be proved to a demonstration to be an ignorant, credulous monk, or a literary or ecclesiastical gossip ; to be preaching to us his dreams, or to have saturated himself with popular absurdities ; he may be cross-examined, and made to contradict himself ; or his own story, as it stands, may be self-destructive ; and yet he may be the index of a hidden fact, and may symbolize a history to which he does not testify.

Now as to St. Bettelin ;—some cloud, it has been *said*, hung about his early years, which made him ever

after a penitent. A wild extravagant tale is recorded by Prior Alexander. We are told how that he was a king's son, and noble in person, and a good Catholic ; and how he shrunk from the licence of his father's court ; and how, to preserve his purity, he went over to Ireland, where he was received by a certain king or chieftain, who had a fair daughter ; and how in a strange land he found the temptation, and fell beneath the sin, which had frightened him from his own. He carried off his beautiful mistress to England, and sought for shelter and concealment in the woods. A wretched childbirth followed, and a tragical issue. While the father was seeking assistance, wolves devoured mother and infant. Bettelin remained a penitent in the wild ; till St. Guthlake, who was leaving Repton in Derbyshire, where he had entered into both clerical and monastic orders, took him with him to Croyland.

Such is the fable ; but it so happens that we seem to be able to produce in this instance the real facts of the case, of which it is but the symbol and record ; and though very different from the above, yet they are so far like it, as, alas ! to be even more criminal and dreadful than it. One Felix, a contemporary of St. Guthlake, wrote the life of the latter, shortly after his death, from the information of the Saint's disciples. Among these was Bettelin ; from him, who was at that time living with St. Guthlake on the most familiar terms, Felix learned the account of St. Guthlake's last days upon earth. Now Felix also tells us, in an earlier passage of the Saint's life, what the crime of Bettelin was ; and, as it would appear, from Bettelin's own mouth ; for there was no one else to tell him. If this be so, we have both a warrant for the authenticity of the story, and a great evidence of St. Bettelin's humility.



“There was a certain clerk,” says Felix, “by name Beccelin, who offered himself for a servant to that great man St. Guthlake, and proposed to live to God holily, under his training. Into this person’s heart the evil spirit entered, and began to puff him up with the pestilential conceits of vain glory ; and next, after he had thus seduced him, he proceeded to suggest to him to seize the deadly weapon, and to kill the master, under whose training he had begun to live to God, with the object, after taking him off, of succeeding to his place, and receiving the veneration of kings and princes. Accordingly, on a day when the aforementioned clerk had come, (as he was wont on the twentieth day,) to shave Guthlake, the man of God, afflicted by monstrous madness, and thirsting with exceeding desire for his blood, he made up his mind to murder him.

“Then the Saint of God, Guthlake, to whom the Lord did never fail to impart a prescience of things to come, having cognizance of the guilt of this new wickedness, began to question him. ‘O, my Beccelin !’ he said, ‘why under this carnal breast hidest thou the old enemy ? Why not vomit forth these pestilential waters of bitter poison ? For I know that thou art deceived by the evil spirit ; wherefore confess the guilty meditations which our enemy, the accuser of the human race, has sown within you, and turn away from them.’ On this, Beccelin, understanding that he had been seduced by the evil spirit, cast himself at holy Guthlake’s feet, acknowledging his sin with tears, and humbly asking pardon. And the man of blessed memory not only forgave him the fault, but even promised him his aid in future troubles.”

Thus speaks a contemporary author, who knew the

parties ; and it is certainly a remarkable passage in St. Guthlake's history, though that does not here concern us, that through life, up to his very death-bed, he was waited on in his bed-room by one who had all but turned the barber's razor into a weapon for his destruction. There is nothing to show that Bettelin did not continue to shave him, as before this occurrence. As to Bettelin himself, this part of his history reminds us of St. Brice, though the offence of the latter was of a far less serious die. Brice succeeded St. Martin in the see of Tours ; but in St. Martin's life-time, his proud boyish spirit showed itself in a scorn and ridicule of the Saint, which approached to the sin of the children who mocked Elisha.

If Bettelin was called to a stern penitence for this great sin, his master, who was to have been the victim of the sin, became a pattern for the penitence. "Recollecting," says Prior Alexander, "that the ancient fathers went about their deserts in sheep-skins and goat-skins, not in linen or cloth, but made use of goat-skins, raw and untanned, conforming themselves also to our first parents, who, on their rejection from the paradise of pleasure, received from God coats made of skins, and knowing that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, they lived on barley bread and muddy water, with great abstinence." On St. Guthlake's death, Bettelin took the news, by the Saint's previous directions, to St. Bega, Guthlake's sister.

What happened to Bettelin after that event does not clearly appear. Ingulphus says that he remained and died in Croyland ; and he speaks of the marble tomb, which contained his relics, as well as Cissa's, near St. Cuthbert, in the Abbey of Croyland. And this is not incompatible altogether with the legend

which connects him with the town of Stafford, and which is as follows :—

Where the town now stands, the river Sow formed in those times an island which was called Bethney. Here St. Bettelin stationed himself for some years, and led a life so holy, that the place which profited by his miraculous gifts in his lifetime, grew into a town under his patronage after his death.

A wild, yet not unpleasing, fable is left us as a record of the Saint's history in this retreat. He had concealed his name when he took possession of the island ; and on his father's death, who was king of those parts, the usurper of St. Bettelin's throne determined, without knowing who he was, and from inbred hatred, as it appears, of religion, to eject him from his island hermitage. However, perhaps the romantic narrative which is now coming will run better in rhyme ; so we set off thus :—

St. Bettelin's wonted prayers are o'er
And his matins all are said,
Why kneeleth he still on his clay-cold floor
By the side of his iron bed ?
Ah ! well may he kneel to Christ in prayer,
For nought is around him but woe and fear ;
By to-morrow's sun the Saint must roam
Far from his cell and his long-lov'd home.
But who would drive this hermit good
From his islet home and his rough old wood ?
He is no man who hath sought the wild
In a wayward mood like a frolicsome child,
Who hath wander'd away from his mother's side
Deep in the merry greenwood to hide.
A golden crown he had cast away
To watch all night and to fast all day ;

He was of those whom the Lord doth drive
To the weary wild with devils to strive,
For the banner'd Cross must be every where,
Wherever the fiend doth make his lair,
And devils trembled and angels smil'd
When the hermit knelt in the weary wild ;
While the peasant arose his beads to tell
When the hermit rang his vesper bell.
But what hath the world to do with him,
That it grudgeth his home by the river's brim ?
Hath it not woods and streams at will ?
But so it hath been and it must be still,
Earth may be broad and its bosom wide,
But the world cannot rest with the cross by its side ;
And the king hath said with a scornful smile,
" The hermit hath chosen a fair green isle,
By the river clasp'd around ;
And the turf is soft round his sweet chapelle,
I warrant too he sleepeth well
To that gushing river's sound ;
A Saint should not dwell in so fair a scene ;
And that river sweet with its islet green,
I swear by high heaven it shall be mine
In spite of this hermit St. Betteline."
And he bade the hermit prove his right
To his islet home in a deadly fight,
And if no champion can be found
He must quit by to-morrow this holy ground.
And who is there for Christ the Lord
To don his armour and draw his sword ?
And will not a knight put lance in rest
To do this hermit's poor behest ?
If for Christ they will not fight,
Foul shame on England's chivalry,
Their dancing plume and armour bright
Are but summer pageantry.

But let the wordlings pass along,
A Saint in prayer is wondrous strong.
"Lord," he saith, "I do not grieve
This sweet place for aye to leave,
For if Thy love abide with me,
Barren cliff or flowery lea,
All is well that pleaseth Thee ;
But for 'Thy glory's sake arise,
Cast down the strong, confound the wise."
He rose from his knee, and then there stole
A low sweet voice to his inmost soul,—
"Man to Saints and Angels dear,
Christ in heaven hath heard thy prayer."
Oh ! how that whisper deep and calm,
Dropp'd on his weary heart like balm.
Then St. Betteline rose, for the morning red
Through his lattic'd window was sweetly shed.
On the red tipp'd willow the dew-drop gloweth,
At his feet the happy river floweth,
And sweetly the lightly-passing breeze
Bendeth the wood anemones,
And all things seem'd to his heart to tell,
Thou shalt ring again thy chapel bell.
Then a man rode up to his lowly door,
One he had never seen before,
A low mean man, and his armour bright
Look'd all too large for his frame so slight ;
But his eye was clear and his voice was sweet,
And it made St. Betteline's bosom beat
As he spoke, and thus his greeting ran,—
"In the name of the Holy Trinity,
Hermit, I come to fight for thee."
"Now Christ bless thee, thou little man,"
'Twas thus St. Betteline said,
And he murmur'd, as meekly he bow'd his head,
"The brightest sword may be stain'd with rust,
The horse and his rider be flung to the dust,
But in Christ alone I put my trust."

And then to the lists together they hied,
Where the king was seated in pomp and in pride,
And the courtiers cried with a merry shout,
“ The hermit hath brought us a champion stout.”
But, hark ! through the forest a trumpet rang,
All harshly it rose with a dissonant clang ;
It had a wild and unearthly tone,
It seem'd by no Christian warrior blown,
And into the lists came a giant form
On a courser as black as a gathering storm ;
His vizor was clos'd, and no mortal sight
E'er saw the face of this wondrous wight,
But his red eye glow'd through that iron shroud,
As the lightning doth rend a midnight cloud ;
So sable a knight and courser, I ween,
In merry England never were seen ;
A paynim knight he seem'd to be,
From a Moorish country beyond the sea.
Then loud laugh'd the giant as on he came
With his armour bright and his eye of flame,
And he look'd on his rival full scornfully,
For he hardly came up to the giant's knee ;
His vizor was up and it show'd to view
His fair long hair and his eye of blue ;
Instead of a war-horse he did bestride
A palfrey white which a girl might ride ;
But on his features there gleam'd the while
That nameless grace and unearthly smile,
Stern, yet as holy virgin's faint,
Which good old monks have lov'd to paint
On the wan visage of a Soldier Saint.
And his trumpet tone rung loud and clear
With a thrilling sound on the 'wilder'd ear,
And each bad man in his inmost heart,
He knew not why, gave a sudden start.
The paynim had laugh'd with a scornful sound
As he look'd for an easy prey,

And he wheel'd his gallant courser round
And address'd him to the fray.
But what hath the dwarfish warrior done ?
He hath sat like a warrior carv'd in stone,
He mov'd not his head or his armed heel,
He mov'd not his hand to grasp the steel.
His long lance was pointing upwards still,
And the wind as it mov'd his banner at will
Show'd work'd on the folds an image good,
The spotless lamb and the holy rood.
But men say that his stature so dwarfish and small,
None could tell how, seem'd stately and tall,
And all at once on his foe he turn'd
A face that with hidden lustre burn'd ;
Ah ! what aileth thee now, thou sable knight ?
Hath that trumpet tone unnerv'd thee quite
That the spear doth shake in thy hand for fear ?
The courser is stopp'd in his wild career,
And the rider is rolling afar on the ground ;
His armour doth ring with a hollow sound,
From the bars of his vizor a voice is heard,
But no man could tell that fearful word,
'Twas the cry of a fiend in agony,
Then vanish'd from earth his steed and he ;
The black knight had fallen before the glance
Of that angelic countenance.
But how hath the angel vanish'd away ?
Oh ! how he went no mortal could say,
But a wild shriek rung through the misty air,
And each man said to his neighbour in fear
" St. Michael hath smitten the fiend with his spear."

What makes the legend still more extravagant is, that the miracle does not seem to have answered the purpose of maintaining St. Bettelin in his insular position. For the Saint, in Plot's words, " disturbed

by some that envied his happiness, removed into some desert mountainous places, where he ended his life, leaving Bethnei to others, who afterwards built it, and called it Stafford, there being a shallow place in the river hereabout, that could easily be passed with the help of a staff only." Ethelfleda built Stafford, the widow of Ethelred, earl of Mercia, in 918. "Now whereabout," Plot continues, "this desert place should be, that St. Bertelline went to, though histories are silent, yet I have some grounds to think that it might be about Throwley, Ilam, and Dovedale ; and that this was the St. Bertram who has a well, an ash, and a tomb at Ilam."

Yet, after all, some facts are needed, to account for the honour in which St. Bettelin was held at Stafford. Those facts, however, are not found in history. We know little or nothing more, than that he was the patron of the town, where a Church was built under his invocation. The fame of miracles would of course explain an increase of devotion shown to him there, could we once trace the circumstances which first introduced his name ecclesiastically into the place.

Of these miracles wrought in his Church, the record of one remains, appended at a later date to the history of Prior Alexander, and its matter-of-fact tone curiously contrasts with the wild fable already related, which goes immediately before it.

"There was," says the anonymous writer, "in the town of Stafford, a man named Willmot, a cook by trade. This man, for many years, almost sixteen, had lost his sight, so as not to be able to go out of doors without some one to lead him. At length, after many years, he was brought to St. Bertellin's Church in the same town, for the purpose of recovery ; and while he

knelt in prayer, before the altar of St. Bertellin, and the priest, whose name was John Chrostias, offered up the Eucharist in the mass to the Supreme Father, the aforementioned blind man regained his sight, and first saw that Venerable Sacrament, rendering thanks to the Supreme God, who had renewed His ancient miracles, for the love of blessed Bertellin. This miracle took place in the year of our Lord 1386."

And this is all that is known, and more than all,—yet nothing to what the angels know,—of the life of a servant of God, who sinned and repented, and did penance and washed out his sins, and became a Saint, and reigns with Christ in heaven.

Legend of St. Neot.

INTRODUCTION.

It is not pretended that every fact in the following Legend can be supported on sound historical evidence. With the materials which we have, it would not only be presumptuous, but impossible, to attempt to determine any thing with any certainty, respecting them ; how much is true, how much fiction. It is enough that we find them in the writings of men who were far better able to know the certainty of what they said than we can be. At the same time, there are certain features in the authorities to which we refer, which seem to call for some particular notice. There are five old Lives of St. Neot extant ; one in Saxon, dating about a hundred and fifty years after his death ; the others, in Latin, written at various subsequent periods. Now of these, the first thing we remark is a striking disagreement in the details of the several narratives. The same sharp clear outline of a character is preserved throughout, but the filling up of the picture seems to vary with the taste and purpose of the writer. The Saxon Life gives one miracle ; the early Latin Lives give others ; while Ramsay of Croyland, the only one

of them who proposes to relate *ascertained facts*, omits all except the last appearance in the battle at Ethendun, and acknowledges openly that, however true the Cornish Legends may be, he cannot find sufficient evidence to justify him in giving them a place in a History constructed as his. Further, while all the others have fallen into the grave anachronism of placing St. Dunstan at Glastonbury, at the period of St. Neot's residence there, Ramsay alone has avoided this. Now of course this sort of scrupulousness infinitely enhances the value of his testimony for what he does say ; but it also indicates a doubt on his part, of the entire credibility in all their parts of his materials. And we observe again, of the other Lives, that all their facts are related with extreme minuteness and accuracy of detail. Now this, if not the highest evidence in their favour, (which it may be) would seem to indicate that they allowed themselves a latitude in their narratives, and made free use of their imagination to give poetic fulness to their compositions. In other words, their Lives are not so much strict biographies, as myths, edifying stories compiled from tradition, and designed not so much to relate facts, as to produce a religious impression on the mind of the hearer. Under the most favourable circumstances, it is scarcely conceivable that uninspired men could write a faithful history of a miraculous life. Even ordinary history, except mere annals, is all more or less fictitious ; that is, the facts are related, not as they really happened, but as they appeared to the writer ; as they happen to illustrate his views or support his prejudices. And if this is so of common facts, how much more so must it be when all the power of the marvellous is thrown in to stimulate the imagination. But to see fully the dif-

ficulties under which the writers of these Lives must have laboured, let us observe a few of the ways in which we all, and time for us, treat the common history and incidents of life.

First ; We all write Legends. Little as we may be conscious of it, we all of us continually act on the very same principle which made the Lives of Saints such as we find them ; only perhaps less poetically.

Who has not observed in himself, in his ordinary dealings with the facts of every-day life, with the sayings and doings of his acquaintance, in short, with every thing which comes before him as a *fact*, a disposition to forget the real order in which they appear, and re-arrange them according to his theory of how they ought to be ? Do we hear of a generous self-denying action, in a short time the real doer and it are forgotten ; it has become the property of the noblest person we know ; so a jest we relate of the wittiest person, frivolity of the most frivolous, and so on ; each particular act we attribute to the person we conceive most likely to have been the author of it. And this does not arise from any wish to leave a false impression scarcely from carelessness ; but only because facts refuse to remain bare and isolated in our memory ; they will arrange themselves under some law or other ; they must illustrate something to us—some character—some principle—or else we forget them. Facts are thus perpetually, so to say, becoming unfixed and re-arranged in a more conceptional order. In this way, we find fragments of Jewish history in the Legends of Greece, stories from Herodotus become naturalized in the tradition of early Rome ; and the mythic exploits of the northern heroes, adopted by the biographers of our Saxon kings. So, uncertain traditions of miracles,

with vague descriptions of name and place, are handed down from generation to generation, and each set of people, as they pass into their minds, naturally group them round the great central figure of their admiration or veneration, be he hero or be he saint. And so with the great objects of national interest. Alfred—"England's darling"—the noblest of the Saxon kings, became mythic almost before his death ; and forthwith, every institution that Englishmen most value, of law or church, became appropriated to him. He divided England into shires ; he established trial by jury ; he destroyed wolves, and made the country so secure, that golden bracelets hung untouched in the open road. And when Oxford was founded, a century was added to its age ; and it was discovered that Alfred had laid the first stone of the first college, and that St. Neot had been the first Professor of Theology.

2. Again even in these unpoetical times, go where we will among the country villages, and we still find superstition strong as ever, we must still confess that the last victory of civilization is not yet won, and romance is yet lingering in the embrace of nature. The wild moor, the rock, the river, and the wood, have still their legend, and the Fairy and the Saint yet find a home when the earth is wild and beautiful. Of course they will go with light and modern education, and perhaps it is as well that it should be so. Even Plato finds that Boreas and Orithuia is an allegory. But it may still be asked whether there are not times when the most civilized, the most enlightened philosopher, looking at Nature as he has to do through his knowledge of Law, and Theory, and Principle, has not experienced very strange sensations in scenes of striking *beauty*, in a thunder storm, or at the sight of the most

familiar place in the light of an unusual sky? Who is there that has searched and explored and dwindled as he searched so low as never with Wordsworth—

———to have “felt a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things——”

If there be any with power of mind so great that they can keep these deep emotions fresh and pure, and yet leave them purely spiritual, let them do so. Such is not the lot of ordinary men. For them at least Plotinus expressed the very condition of their apprehending them at all when he said, “that those only could be said to have realized the spiritual, who had clothed it in form of sense.” And so ever children, and child-like ages, who make up for the want of vigour in the understanding by the strength of their faith and the fervour of poetry and imagination, go out and robe these vanishing feelings in shape and colour. The old Greeks saw Naiads sporting in every fountain, and when the breezes played among the branches of the forest, they heard the Zephyrs whispering to the Dryads; and the Legends of Saints which still cling to the scenes of their earthly glory, are but Christian expressions of the same human instinct.

And those illusions, which excite the scorn
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,
Are they not mainly outward ministers
Of Inward Conscience? with whose service charged

They come and go, appeared and disappear ;
Diverting evil purposes, remorse
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief
Or pride of heart abating : and whene'er
For less important ends those phantoms move,
Who would forbid them if their presence serve
Among wild mountains and unpeopled heaths,
Filling a space else vacant to exalt
The form of Nature and enlarge her powers.¹

3. Time in another way plays strange tricks with facts, and is ever altering, shifting, and even changing their nature in our memory. Every man's past life is becoming mythic to him ; we cannot call up again the feelings of our childhood, only we know that what then seemed to us the bitterest misfortunes, we have since learnt by change of character or circumstance, to think very great blessings ; and even when there is no change, and were they to recur again, they are such as we should equally repine at, yet by mere lapse of time sorrow is turned to pleasure, and the sharpest pang at present becomes the most alluring object of our retrospect. The sick bed, the school trial, loss of friends, pain and grief of every kind, become rounded off and assume a soft and beautiful grace. "Time dissipates to shining æther the hard angularity of facts ;" the harshest of them are smoothed and chastened off in the past like the rough mountains and jagged rocks in the distant horizon. And so it is with every other event of our lives ; read a letter we wrote ten years ago, and how impossible we find it to recognize the writer in our altered selves. Incident after incident rises up and bides its day, and then sinks back into the landscape.

¹ Wordsworth, vol. vi. p. 145.

It changes by distance, and we change by age. While it was present it meant one thing, now it means another, and to-morrow perhaps something else on the point of vision alters. Even old Nature endlessly and patiently reproducing the same forms, the same beauties, cannot reproduce in us the same emotions we remember in our childhood. Then all was Fairy-land ; now time and custom have deadened our sense, and

The things which we have seen we now can see no more.

This is the true reason why men people past ages with the superhuman and the marvellous. They feel their own past was indeed something miraculous, and they cannot adequately represent their feelings except by borrowing from another order of beings.

Thus age after age springs up, and each succeeds to the inheritance of all that went before it ; but each age has its own feelings, its own character, its own necessities ; therefore receiving the accumulations of literature and history, it absorbs and fuses and remodels them to meet the altered circumstances. The histories of Greece and Rome are not yet exhausted, every new historian finds something more in them. Alcibiades and Catiline are not to us what they were to Thucydides and Sallust, even though we use their eyes to look at them. So it has been with facts, and so it always shall be. It holds with the lives of individuals, it holds with histories even where there is contemporary writing, and much more than either, when as with many of the Lives of the Saints, we can only see them as they appeared through the haze of several generations with no other light but oral tradition.

And with the subject of the present memoir there is

yet a further difficulty. The authority for the Cornish Miracles, at least the early ones, is only the word of his servant Barius. Now all accounts agree that St. Neot strictly charged him to mention none of them until his death, so that at any rate a long period must have elapsed before they could be committed to writing at all. Whether this was done however by any one before the Saxon Life which we have was written, it is impossible to tell. The writer makes no mention of any other source but tradition. There may or may not have been memorials preserved in the monastery ; but if not the very earliest written account cannot date earlier than a hundred and fifty years after his death.

Thus stands the case then. A considerable period has elapsed from the death of a Saint, and certain persons undertake to write an account of his very remarkable life. We cannot suppose them ignorant of the general difficulties of obtaining evidence on such subjects ; what materials they worked with we have no means of ascertaining ; they do not mention any. Now supposing them to have been really as vague as they seem, let us ask ourselves what we should have done under similar circumstances. Of course we should attempt no more than what we do as it is,—if we could not write a Life we should write a Legend. And it is mere assumption to take for granted that either they or any other under similar circumstances ever intended more. And this view seems confirmed if we look to their purpose. The monks of the middle ages were not mere dry annalists, who strung together hard catalogues of facts for the philosophers of modern Europe to analyze and distil and resolve into principles. Biography and history were with them simple and direct methods of *teaching* character. After all, the facts of a man's

life are but a set of phænomena, frail weary weeds in which the idea of him clothes itself. Endless as the circumstances of life are, the forms in which the same idea may develope itself, given a knowledge of the mechanic forces, and we can calculate the velocities of bodies under any conceivable condition. The smallest arc of a curve is enough for the mathematician to complete the figure. Take the character therefore and the powers of a man for granted, and it is very ignorant criticism to find fault with a writer because he embodies them in this or that fact, unless we can be sure he intended to leave a false impression.

What we have been saying then comes to this. Here are certain facts put before us, of the truth or falsehood of which we have no means of judging. We know that such things have happened frequently both among the Jews and in the history of the Church ; and therefore there is no *a priori* objection to them. On the other hand we are all disposed to be story tellers ; it is next to impossible for tradition to keep facts together in their original form for any length of time ; and in those days at any rate there was a strong poetical as well as religious feeling among the people. Therefore as the question, "were these things really so?" cannot be answered, it is no use to ask it. What we should ask ourselves is, Have these things a meaning ? Do they teach *us* any thing ? If they do, then as far as we are concerned, it is no matter whether they are true or not as facts ; if they do not, then let them have all the sensible evidence of the events of yesterday, and they are valueless.

A few remarks on the other authorities which we have quoted, shall conclude this already too long preface.

The appearance at St. Peter's church at York is related in one of Alcuin's letters ; it is only a fragment however, and preserved by William of Malmesbury, who is the only authority for its genuineness. The story of the enchanted raven is told by Asser, and is in that part of his work which has never been questioned ; the long passage however which is translated relating to Alfred and St. Neot, there are some doubts about, as it is not found in the earliest manuscript. That Ragnar Lodbrog was murdered by Ella, and not in East Anglia (as the Lives of St. Edmund say,) is concluded from the Quida Lodbrokar, supposed to be the composition of Aslauga, and the unanimous voice of the Danish historians.

What authority Ramsay had before him when writing his Life does not appear. It seems clear however from the way in which he speaks, that he had such (beyond what has come down to us) at least for the Ethendun miracle. His account of this is entirely supported by Nicholas Harpsfeld, who makes long extracts from certain Annals of Winton. But of these Annals nothing is now known. They cannot be found, nor is it known what or where they were.

Dr. Whitaker seems successfully to have proved the identity of St. Neot and Prince Athelstan of Kent. All the Old Lives state positively that Neot was the eldest son of Ethelwulf. That in Latin verse (the oldest of the Latin Lives) that he was brought up a soldier. Again, all the old historians agree that Ethelwulf had but five sons. Athelstan by an early marriage ; Alfred and his three brothers by a late. These four last sat successively on the throne of England, and were buried at Winton. Athelstan remains alone unaccounted for. *He disappears at once after the great battle of Sand-*

wich, in 851. Dr. Whitaker's elaborate Life of St. Neot however will abundantly supply any further curiosity on this subject, as well as on the other very controverted one, the removal of the relics into Huntingdonshire, which we have not alluded to, not as questioning the fact, but because it is of no interest except to an Antiquarian.

Legend of St. Neot.


SECTION I.

PRINCE ATHELSTAN.

THE stars shone out on the bay of Sandwich, and the song of revelry and mirth had succeeded to the war-cry and the din of the battle. Twenty thousand Northmen lay dead and dying on the down and on the shore, and the mead and the ale was flowing in the camp of the Saxons. Yet was there one among the victors that found no rest for his wearied spirit in the excitement of the banquet; the frantic festivities of his fierce countrymen seemed not to him a fit mode of thanksgiving, for deliverance from a ruthless heathen foe; and in the calm silence of the night, he sought to be alone with his God, to offer praise to Him for that day's success. The eagle plume in his bonnet declared him of the royal race of Cerdic, and though his person was small, almost diminutive, yet his noble gait and princely bearing seemed to say he was no degenerate son of that illustrious family;—it was Athelstan, the Prince of Kent. Alone he stood upon the battle-field, and would have prayed, but for the strange tumult of

disordered thoughts that pressed upon his spirit ; there lay the dead and the dying ; and the dull moan of agony, and the sharp cry of the parting soul, mixed harshly with the howl of the gathering wolves, and the shrill scream of the eagle and the sea fowl. It seemed to his fevered imagination, as if the spirits of hell were flocking there for their prey ; for the warriors that lay there were heathen Danes, Odin's sworn slaves, and bound with a deadly curse to blot out the name of Christian in Saxon England. Yet was there calm above, in the bright Heaven ; and the stars that shone so silently, and the peaceful sea, told him that, though man was wild and evil, yet was creation still fair—still offered willing and obedient service to its Maker. The very drunken music of the war banquet became pure in the night air, and fell with softening cadence on his ear. The ripple washed upon the shore in measured intervals ; and he felt as he listened, that there are powers above, which man knows not of ; a will serenely working in this world of shadows, which is not man's will, as the waves of time roll on, and break upon the shores of eternity.

Well had the young prince borne him that day in the battle ; where the strife had been the hottest, there had risen loudest the war-cry of Kent ; his hand had been red with slaughter, and he repented not of this, for he had done but his duty as a faithful servant of the Cross ; yet he felt it was an awful thing to disembody a living soul. He had that day won a great victory ; the storm-cloud that threatened to wrap his country in fire and desolation, was for a time dispersed ; yet he feared still, for he remembered the prophecy of Alcuin. England had had warning that if she repented not, she should be delivered into the hands of



the Heathen ; and England had given no credence, but went on still in wickedness.

Fifty years before had Lindisfarne felt the fury of the Danes, and from amidst the smoking ruins rose the prophet's voice :—

¹ “Behold how the shrine of St. Cuthbert runs red with the blood of God's priests, and the most holy place in Britain is given over a prey into the hands of the heathen. What meaneth that shower of blood which I saw fall from the north, under a clear sky, on the altar of St. Peter's Church, at York, but that by the northern nations blood shall be shed in this land ?”

And to Ethelward, Archbishop of Canterbury, he had written further,—


“Now, because of the scourge which has already fallen on parts of this island, in which our fathers have lived three hundred and forty years, I would have you know what Gildas, the wisest of the Britons says, that these same Britons, because the nobles were corrupt and avaricious, the bishops indolent, the people luxurious and profligate, had lost their country. Beware, therefore, how these same vices grow to a head among ourselves ; that God in His mercy may yet preserve to us in peace and comfort, that land which He has thought fit to give to us.”

² And the sun had been darkened, and awful signs and wonders had been seen in the heavens ; huge sheets of lightning rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons flying across the heavens, and these tokens had been followed by a great famine ; yet for all this Athelstan knew that these warning voices

¹ Alcuin Opera. vol. i. Epist. 9, and 12.

² Saxon Chronicle.

had not been heard ; that England had grown worse instead of better. The treacheries of Offa to St. Ethelbert were unavenged ; the blood of the young St. Kenelm still cried to heaven. The Thanes of Wessex, who had restrained themselves under the strong hand of the despotic Egbert, under the feebler rule of his successor, had broken loose into every kind of lawless violence ; for Ethelwulf had been dragged unwillingly from the cloister to the throne, and the serene quiet of a monastery had unfitted him for the control of a fierce and turbulent nobility. Abbeys and monasteries were everywhere falling into decay ; scarce any but the poor and the ignorant were to be found among their inmates. An unnatural schism divided the Church, and the Saxons, and the British of Wales and Cornwall, lay mutually each under the curse of the other. The Church herself, leant for her support on the arm of the flesh ; and bishop Aelstan, of Shirborne, was Athelstan's colleague in command that very day. But Athelstan had been trained in the way he should go, by the venerable St. Swithun, his father, king Ethelwulf's, dearest friend ; and under his tutelage, had learnt where to look for help in the day of trouble. He would not trust in his bow ; it was not his sword that could help him, but God's right hand, and His arm and the might of His countenance. Therefore, when God was wroth with His people, and had sworn that unless they repented He would cut them off, and they had not repented, He had sworn, and would He not perform ? Without His favour, the armies of the Saxons would be scattered like dust before the wind. There was yet time ; the last day of trial was not yet past ; they had that day won a great battle ; but penitence, and prayer, and humiliation,



could alone avail to obtain that without which all else was useless, and in the moment of victory, he felt its uselessness. He remembered the lessons of his teacher, that the truest warrior was he who warred with evil, by prayer and fasting, in its immediate home, in the heart of man ; and therefore, from his childhood, prince Athelstan had longed to make his home in the seclusion of the cloister. But he was then an only son ; and as his father in like case had obeyed when so obliged, so he, for his country's sake, had done what he conceived his duty, and had grown up a warrior. But since that time, king Ethelwulf had taken another wife, and four goodly sons were born to him, and so was the bar which existed between him and the hope of his youth, taken away ; and early cravings and high aspirations now in this solemn hour came streaming back upon his soul ; he remembered where his royal ancestor, king Ina, when tired of the vanity of a throne, had found peace at last ; and how in holy seclusion, King Offa had tried to wash away with tears the foul remembrance of his crime. Might not he too do better for his country thus, as well as for himself ? She had no lack of warriors, but few and scanty indeed were her Saints ; and never did devout lips at Easter Festival, crave more eagerly for the holy wafer, than did now prince Athelstan for the angelic food of fast and penance in the monastic cell ; and he kneeled down there upon the battle-field, and prayed for guidance. Now, whether it was that a deep sleep fell upon him, or a bodily form there presented itself to his waking senses, but an angel from heaven appeared to him, and bade him be of good heart, and go and do as he desired. He had chosen the good part and God was with him.

SECTION II.

GLASTONBURY ABBEY.

HERE therefore may properly be said to commence the life of St. Neot. The princely warrior, who had well and boldly fought the good fight with the worldly and carnal servants of the Evil One, was now thought worthy of the more honourable yet more dangerous post, to fight him in spirit in his own dominions ; and as he put off the world, so put he off with it, all to the last link that bound him to it ; father and brothers, and rank and wealth and kingdom, he forsook all, even his name. Prince Athelstan became the monk Neotus ; the very meaning of his new title “ the renewed,” implies, that his past life was to be as though it had not been ; or as the life of another man. In such change is entire revolution of heart and hope and feeling. It is indeed a death ; a resurrection, a change from earth on earth to heaven on earth ; before he did his duty to God in and through his duty to the world ; now what he does for the world is but indirect, but he is permitted a closer union, a more direct service to God. And therefore those good men who gave their labours to commemorate the life of this holy Saint, do properly commence their task at this point ; and that we too who are permitted to follow in their footsteps, may labour in the same reverential spirit as they laboured ; let us join with Abbot Ramsay of Croyland, and say,—

“ Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God to remove that holy Saint, Neotus, to the blessed company of Saints in heaven, I have undertaken to record such actions as he performed while here on earth ; therefore

with a deep sense of my own unworthiness for so high a task, I pray to the Fountain of all mercies, that of His infinite goodness He will deign to send me His most gracious help, that I may be enabled to make known such things as are handed down by tradition, concerning this venerable man ; and that I may have him for my protector and intercessor in all dangers."

The Abbey to which he retired was Glastonbury, then under the charge of Abbot Edmund. From what we hear of St. Neot's life there, this Abbey must have formed some exception in point of order and discipline, to the general character of the monasteries of the age ; and perhaps this reason may have influenced him in his election. But Glastonbury had long been a favourite of the race of Cerdic ; Kentwin calls her the " Mother of the Saints," and a charter of immunity and privilege, granted her by Ina, still exists. Most venerable of the Abbeys of England, tradition assigned her for a founder, St. Joseph of Arimathea ; and Holy Patrick spent the last years of his eventful life within her walls. King Ina thought God's blessing was with princes, who used their power for the protection of His Church. In deep faith, and generous spirit, heaped he his favour on this holy place ; only entreating that there should be offered daily prayer and supplication for the remission of his sins, and the prosperity and future welfare of his kingdom ; and because he felt a time might come, when bold bad men should hold the power of the land, and the spoiler might seek to lay his impious hands on God's inheritance ; he solemnly guarded his bequests by a fearful imprecation of God's vengeance on any who should dare interfere with them. Vain precaution ! Nine centuries passed away, and there sat a king *on the throne* of England, who hanged the last Abbot,

because he lifted up his voice against sacrilege, and refused to surrender the solemn trust which God had given him. Alas for Glastonbury now ! her choirs are silent ; the virgin of England lies in the dust ; her holy places are desolate ; her altars are defiled ; and ivy hangs on the old walls ; the pale stars glimmer through the broken arches on the tombs of the departed Saints ; and the owl and the night-crow keep their long watches in the deserted aisles, where for fifteen hundred years by night and day there went up ceaseless prayers to heaven for the prosperity of England.

King Ina believed in the power of prayer, and did what he did ; and prayer did Neot think surer safeguard than sword or shield ; therefore in his zeal and earnestness to serve in this way, he strove to purify himself, that so he might be heard. Accordingly with the great St. Anthony for his model,

“ From the day of his entrance he began sedulously to attach himself to the most holy of those by whom he was surrounded, and endeavoured to emulate their several excellencies. Now in the flower of his youth he climbed as it were step by step, the heights of sanctity ; and gave himself up to do the work of heaven, in the society of such men as he deemed the most devoted servants of God. Like the bees who are wont to blend together the savours of many kinds of flowers, lest the taste be cloyed by a too uniformly simple sweetness ; so did this holy man exhaust and appropriate to himself the particular graces of each several individual, and endeavour after every virtue of self-government ; arming himself thus at all points against the enemy of mankind, lest by one slip or fall he might give him an opportunity of reducing him entirely to his service.

So therefore he imitated one man in his continence, a second in affability and good temper, a third in severity, a fourth in meekness and loving-kindness, a fifth in passing sleepless nights in psalmody. Whoever was most diligent in the study of holy scripture, in fasting and prayer, in humility and mortification, sitting in sackcloth and ashes ; in patient endurance or compassionate forbearance, these he chose as his examples ; and thus possessing in his own person all these vicarious graces, yet was he humble to every one, affable in conversation, considerate and kind in transacting business, calm and dignified in appearance, grave in gesture, sincere and upright, and from his cradle pure and spotless."

His personal property, reserving only what was entirely necessary for his support, he distributed among the poor, and in supplying his necessities, even to his abstemious biographer, his abstemiousness was remarkable. Delicate meat was not for him ; even his coarse black bread he sometimes denied himself, that he might have the more for the poor.

"Bidding his stomach fast long and late, he administered to his soul the daintiest morsels of heavenly food."

He thought not of his royal origin ; he regretted not the pomp and luxury of his youth ; in the dead of the night he left his hard pallet, to offer praise and thanksgiving, and that none might know of these extraordinary devotions, he would change his clothes, and disguised as the meanest of the secular penitents, would watch till daybreak in the Church, and then steal away to his cell and resume his ordinary habit.

Only one relaxation he permitted himself in the severity of his discipline ; and that was the society of

a dear friend ; Athelwold, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, spent his youth in the monastery of Glastonbury, and was the chosen associate of the royal Saint. Among the many beautiful fragments of thought, which yet shine out and smile upon us from out of those dark times, not the least interesting is part of a conversation between these two holy men. The question had turned upon the position of man in the world,—what was his business here ; and Neot illustrated his opinion from our Lord's history.

“In the characters of Mary and Martha, may be seen the two kinds of Christian life ; each a lawful and each in its way a happy one ; the life of active labour in the world, the contemplative life of retirement from it. Martha is the first. She ministers to our Lord's necessities, and her conduct is not displeasing ; but Mary is thought deserving the higher praise, who knows no place but the feet of Jesus, who knows no business but to listen to his words. Let it be ours to choose like Mary the one thing needful ; let us not be like Martha troubled about many things. Do I then recommend idleness ? Nay, for life is short, and labour is profitable, and idleness is destructive to the soul. *The choice is in the kind of work.* Our work is the spiritual work, to subdue the flesh and live after the Spirit, to do the things of the Spirit. Ours is the good part to seek only the way of eternal life, and pursue it to the end, that so hereafter we may be found in the number of those who have been obedient to their Lord.”

So taught Neot, and so he lived. From following the example of others, he became himself an example to all others, in fasting and prayer, in watchings often, in *giving of alms*, in the care of the poor, in the study

of holy scripture, and in all manner of holy conversation. Such unusual sanctity in so young a man soon attracts general notice. His name spread far, and the Bishop sent for him and held long conversations with him. On this occasion he was permitted to enter on his Diaconate; and received on his return to the monastery, the office of Sacristan. There is but one thing told of his conduct while holding this position,—his reverential care of the holy vessels; and this may seem at first but a small matter, scarcely worth recording until we remember what these vessels are, and what their use. Perhaps the words of an English poet on this subject may lead us to a right appreciation of it.³

“ Never was gold or silver graced thus
Before.

To bring this body and this blood to us
Is more

Than to crown kings
Or be made rings,
For star-like diamonds to glitter in.

* * * *

When the great king offers to come to me
As food,

Shall I suppose his carriages can be
Too good?

No! stars to gold
Turned never could
Be rich enough to be employed so.

If I might wish then, I would have this bread,
This wine,
Vesseled in what the sun might blush to shed
His shine

³ Hervey, the Synagogue.

When he should see—
But till that be
I'll rest contented with it as it is.

Thus steadily trod Neot on the path of sanctity. He used no adventitious means to rise to rank and place ; he in the Abbey walls was but as the meanest of the people ; earthly crown was his by birthright ; glory and honour he had won by talent and by daring ; but he knew that to the heavenly crown for which he struggled, and the favour of God for which he thirsted, there led but one way—the way of holiness.

So highly honourable was St. Neot's conduct, that long before the ordinary period of his Diaconate expired, he was recommended for the office of Priest. Unwillingly he accepted this new honour. So deeply unworthy he felt himself, that it was almost by force that he was at last induced to submit. " Surrounded by Laity as well as Clergy, and rather dragged than going of his own free will, he at length received his ordination."

" Dissatisfied with his past conduct now as inadequate for his new calling, all that he had done before he accounted as nothing. He redoubled his acts of piety, and from holy became more holy. His firmness became more enduring ; his abstinence longer ; his humility deeper ; his garments of greater coarseness."

Now too he began to go about among the people instructing and preaching to them.

" Like a never-failing fountain, he gave the thirsty to drink large draughts of the word of God : by his prayers he drove the evil spirits from such as were possessed, and healed such as were diseased in body and in soul." " The people flocked to him for comfort and

advice, and none who sought him ever returned empty. With all he had learnt to sympathize. Rejoicing with those that rejoiced, and weeping with those that wept, he became all things to all men, that he might win all to Christ."

And as time went on, God left him not without special mark of His favour, and not only thus enabled him to scatter His benefits among the people ; but that all men might know that such a life as his, did indeed raise its possessor above the weaknesses and imperfections of this mortal life, He began to work sensible miracles by his hand.

It was the custom of the monks of the Abbey, at the hour of mid-day, to retire alone to their several cells, for private prayer and meditation. This hour was held sacred, and no communication of any sort was permitted among the brethren. Neot, whose cell was nearest to the great gate of the monastery, was disturbed in his devotions by a violent and continued knocking. On repairing to the grating to ascertain the cause, he discovered a person who might not be refused, pressing in haste for admission ; he immediately hurried to the door, but, to his confusion and perplexity, he found that from the smallness of his stature he was unable to reach the lock. The knocking now became more violent, and Neot, in despair of natural means of success, prayed to God for assistance. Immediately, the lock slid gently down the door, until it reached the level of his girdle, and thus he was enabled to open it without further difficulty. This remarkable miracle is said to have been witnessed to by all the brethren, for the lock continued in its place, and the people flocked together from all quarters to see it.

SECTION III.

NEOT THE HERMIT.

HOLY are the characters of those whom God chooses to do His work on earth. The powers of nature forgot their wonted courses, and submitted to the will of St. Neot, but long and arduous penance was yet before him, ere his spirit should be sanctified to do the work of an apostle. The hardy children of the race of the Cymry, from their rocky fastnesses in Wales and Cornwall, still beheld with hatred the proud Saxon in the halls of their own ancestors, and refused to recognize them as brethren, even in the common ties of Christian fellowship. Proudly they stood aloof from Christendom, and because the Saxon was in communion with Rome, they denounced as Antichrist its holy bishop ;⁴ arrogantly vaunting to themselves the proud title of the Apostolic Church of England. From the heights of Dartmoor to where the restless waves of the Atlantic wash the far point of Tol Peden Penwith the crusading armies of Egbert found easy passage through the deserted vallies, while in their inaccessible mountain fortresses, the British laughed to scorn such efforts to subdue them ; entangled in the deep ravines, and where advance had been so easy, finding bridges broken, valleys closed up, and passes occupied by these hardy mountain bands, retreat was now impossible ; troop after troop of the invaders fell victims to the fury of the people, and a miserable remnant of Egbert's gallant army only

⁴ Roger de Wendov. p. 91. Bede Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. Wm. Malmsbury. Also, Borlase. Hist. of the Antiquities of Cornwall.

escaped, to tell the fate of the last attempt that was ever made by force of arms on the Cymry of the west.⁵

When the sword had failed, the Church was to be successful, and this unnatural feud was now to end. A humble monk was the chosen instrument of providence to effect this great purpose ; and an angel was sent to St. Neot, at Glastonbury, to bid him prepare himself for a long journey, into an unknown and barbarous land. With unflinching trust, this servant of the Lord obeyed His call. He made no difficulty ; he sought no time for enquiry ; with but one companion, the faithful Barius, having taken affectionate leave of his dear friends, in his much loved monastery, he set out on foot, in the direction the angel bade him. For many days they walked on, over hill and dale, over moor and down, and still the Spirit that moved the Saint, had given no token that he had reached the appointed spot, still urged him forward unremittingly. And they had crossed the rich vales of Somersetshire, and from the high ridge of Dartmoor, they gazed wistfully, for the last time, on the spot they loved so dearly ; yet they pressed on, and now they had penetrated far into the wilderness of Cornwall. Along the wild and desolate range of moorland which divides the county, they were wearily dragging themselves along, the third week after their departure from Glastonbury—avoiding the town of Liskeard, where there lived a fierce chief, who feared not God, and was a deadly enemy of the Saxons ; they were traversing the southern edge of the moor,

⁵ Malmsbury and Wendover say, that Egbert conquered Cornwall as well as Wales. It is clear that there was a desperate slaughter, and that Egbert found it impossible to maintain his ground.

when, at an abrupt turn of a hill, they found themselves on the edge of a deep and narrow gorge, which carries the water of a small river, from a neighbouring morass to the sea. Broken into a succession of small waterfalls, the stream rushed swiftly down the abrupt side of a beautiful valley, and far below them wound gracefully along the green strip of meadow land in the bottom, while the luxuriant foliage of the dense masses of wood which clothed its sides, showed in grateful contrast to the long dreary tract over which they had passed. On descending the side of the hill, they came to a place where a rudely constructed basin received the pure water of a fountain, which there first bubbled into light, and, by virtue of a blessing from the good St. Gueryr, possessed a healing influence for all who sought its aid in faith and confidence ; a small chapel adjoining it, and sanctified by the presence of the relics of the same saint, invited them to pause for their devotions, and within its sacred walls, the same angel who bade him go forth from Glastonbury, now brought St. Neot the welcome news that this was his journey's end. Here, in this lonely spot, he was to spend seven years in a hermit's cell, and live by the labour of his own hands ; yet was he not unsupported by Him who had sent him there. From the time of his arrival, to the close of his trial, a continuous sensible miracle declared the abiding presence of the favour of God. They had spent one night there, and the Saint was in the chapel, when Barius came in haste to tell him that three fish were playing in the basin where the fountain rose. St. Neot ordered him on no account to touch them, until he should have himself enquired what this strange thing might mean. In answer to his prayer, the same angel appeared, and told him that the fish were there

for his use, and that every morning one might be taken and prepared for food ; if he faithfully obeyed this command, the supply should never fail, and the same number should even continue in the fountain. And so it was, and ever the three fish were seen to play there, and every morning one was taken and two were left, and every evening were three fish leaping and gamboling in the bubbling stream ; therefore did the Saint offer nightly praise and thanksgiving, for this so wonderful preservation ; and time went on, and ever more and more did St. Neot's holiness grow and expand and blossom. The fruit was yet to come.

“ Here he exerted the strength he had acquired before ; and exhibited in his own person the truth of those things which he had learnt in Holy Scripture. The thorns of riches choked him not ; the burdens of this world retarded him not. Forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forward to those which were before, he ever pressed forward to obtain the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus.”

His discipline was so strict, and continued with such unrelaxing severity, that on a certain occasion he was taken ill in consequence. The faithful Barius, ever anxious to anticipate his master's smallest want, if by any means some portion of the saintly radiance might so be reflected upon him, was anxious to prepare some food, to be ready for him on his awaking from a sleep into which, after nights of watchfulness, he had at length fallen. Here, however, he was met by a difficulty : his master's illness had reduced him to a state of extreme delicacy, and he was at a loss how he ought to dress his food. Hastily and incautiously he resorted to a dangerous expedient. Instead of one fish, he took *two from the basin*, and roasting one and boiling the

other, he presented both to St. Neot for choice, on his awaking from his sleep. In dismay and terror the Saint learnt what had been done, and springing from his couch, and ordering Barius instantly to replace both fish as they were in the water, himself spent a night and a day in prayer and humiliation. Then at length were brought the welcome tidings of forgiveness ; and Barius joyfully reported that both fish were swimming in the water. After this, his illness left him, and the supply in the fountain continued as before.

In the monastery of Glastonbury he had learnt the mode of self-discipline by which St. Patrick had attained his saintly eminence, and now in his hermitage he almost rivalled him in austerities. Every morning St. Patrick repeated the Psalter through from end to end, with the hymns and canticles, and two hundred prayers. Every day he celebrated mass, and every hour he drew the holy sign across his breast one hundred times ; in the first watch of the night he sung a hundred psalms, and knelt two hundred times upon the ground ; and at cockcrow he stood in water, until he had said his prayers. Similarly each morning went St. Neot's orisons to heaven from out of his holy well ; alike in summer and in the deep winter's cold, bare to his waist, he too each day repeated the Psalter through.

One day when he was thus engaged in the depth of winter, he was disturbed by suddenly hearing the noise of a hunting party riding rapidly down the glen. Unwilling that any earthly being should know of his austerities, but only the One who is over all, he sprung hastily from the water and was retiring to his home, when he dropped one of his shoes. He did not wait to pick it up, but hurried off and completed his devotions *in secret*.

“And when he had finished his psalms, and his reading, and his prayers, with all diligence and care, he remembered his shoe and sent his servant to fetch it. In the meantime a fox, wandering over hill and vale, and curiously prying into every nook and corner, had chanced to come to the place where the holy man had been standing, and had lighted upon the shoe and thought to carry it off. And an angel who loved to hover in hallowed places, and to breathe an atmosphere which was sanctified by the devotions of God’s Saints, was present there invisibly and saw this thing, and he would not that such an one as St. Neot should be molested even in so small a matter, so that he had sent the sleep of death upon the fox, and Barius when he came there found him dead, arrested at the instant of his theft, yet holding the thongs of his shoe in his mouth. Then he approached in fear and wonder, and took the shoe and brought it to the holy man, and told him all that had happened.”

And as such holy life receives such manifest tokens of the Divine favour and protection, and extraordinary powers display themselves, as the spirit becomes emancipated from its thralldom to the flesh, so was it permitted to exercise its ordinary influence in winning others by its natural dignity and attractiveness. Few persons ever visited St. Neot’s valley except on hunting parties, and another adventure from one of these befell him, as he was engaged as before at his fountain. He was standing by the water when a young and beautiful fawn bounded from the adjoining thicket, and panting from weariness and terror sought a refuge at his feet. Hitherto the poor creature had known man but as its foe, but the serene countenance of the holy man had no *terror for the innocent and oppressed*, and crouching

closely to him with upturned imploring eyes, it appeared to beseech his protection. Not so the fierce and hungry bloodhounds that followed hot behind. Nature has nothing more terrible to savageness and cruelty than the gentle majesty of virtue ; and the frightened animals shrunk back cowed and overawed into the wood. Up came the wild hunter and hallooed them to the prey, but his hot spirit too was quenched in the pure influences which flowed from the countenance of the Saint ; he felt the warning, the mild rebuke cut him to the heart, and in the first enthusiasm of repentance, he hung up his horn as an offering at the shrine of St. Petrox, and himself assumed the habit of a monk and retired to the same monastery.

And angels sought fellowship with this blessed man, and as the long period of his hermit life passed on, not seldom was he favoured with their high and awful conversation. One more illustrious hunter visited the shrine, and that was his young brother Prince Alfred. In the boyish excitement of the chace he had penetrated into these remote wildernesses beyond the boundaries of his father's dominion ; but he left his sport, and sought his saintly brother for advice and counsel. In early childhood, this noble-hearted boy had learnt to realize the hard lesson that "God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," and, when oppressed by the infirmity of the flesh, had solemnly prayed that God would be pleased to send upon him some disorder, which might the better enable him to subdue it ; and God had heard his prayer, and had sent the ficus on him, and afflicted him with very grievous sickness ; so grievous indeed, and so severe, that he could no longer bear it, and now, in St. Gueryr's shrine, with his brother's intercession, he prayed that the waters of the

well might exert their healing influence in his favour, and that some other disorder in the room of this, might be sent on him, which he might be the better able to endure ; and this prayer too was heard. And Alfred went back on his way, and became king of England, and Neot went strictly and holily on in his, and for seven years never for one day relaxed the severity of his discipline ; remembering the solemn words of his great Master, " Whoso taketh not his cross and beareth it after me, is not worthy of me." Each did his work on earth ; and if any should ask what earthly work St. Neot had done hitherto for England, in her many trials and dangers, we answer, that though we see not the under current of Providence, and know not *in what way* the mysterious influence of Saints avail, yet we do know that they are the salt of the earth : we do know that ten righteous men would have saved the cities of the plain, and that while just Lot continued within their cursed walls, God Himself declared that He could do nothing.

However this be, as we have seen St. Neot hitherto in one form, we are now to see him in another. Hitherto, though his lamp shone brightly, it shone not to the world. In the earth, but not of the earth, the mysteries of the spirit had been in part unfolded to him ; nature had reversed her laws for him ; angels had been his companions ; and in their serene company, the chains of his earthly prison-house had burst asunder and fallen off from him ; at length he was free. How glorious a state for a frail child of Adam here on earth ; yet was there a more glorious behind. For it is more glorious for one who has tasted the heavenly vision, and has had his dwelling in the mysterious Presence ; his body on earth, his spirit beyond the

stars, to remember his brethren in captivity walking among vain shadows in their prison cave, and disquieting themselves in vain, to forget his more immediate and proper good, to disrobe himself and come down among them, to sway and guide their feeble trembling efforts in the right way. For it is written, that this perplexing life riddle shall never find solution until the Saints possess and rule the earth. Thus came Neot back among mankind ; and that nothing should be done disorderly, although he had received his Apostolic commission from God Himself, yet must it be confirmed by the visible head of the Church on earth, and he went to Rome to receive the benediction of Pope Leo. Nearly two hundred years before a college had been founded there, by the piety of the royal Ina, for the instruction of the Anglo-Saxon students in theology. To this place St. Neot proceeded, and spent many months among them. The fame of the princely anchorite had preceded him, and he was welcomed with the warmest enthusiasm. The holy father gave his fullest sanction to his purpose, and at length dismissed him with his benediction, and the charge to preach the word of God among the people. And now commencing his labours, he did not return home immediately, but made a missionary circuit, teaching among the unconverted tribes of Prussia and northern Germany. The same powers which had been granted to the earliest apostles, were continued to him, and wherever he went he was enabled to work miracles, in attestation of the truth of his mission. "For," says his biographer, "if Christ be the head of the elect, and the faithful are members of Him, according to the word of the apostle, 'we being many are one body in Christ,' what wonder if such members as adhere to Him as their head, should

receive peculiar virtues from that head. St. Neot abides in Christ, and Christ in him ; since He has made him thus to sparkle with miracles, in this fleeting world of shadows."

SECTION IV.

THE MONASTERY.

AT the end of the year, the Saint returned to Neotstowe, not to resume his seclusion, but at length to work the work which God had appointed for him, peacefully to accomplish, by gentle means, what the sword of Egbert had attempted so unsuccessfully, to bring back the schismatic church of Cornwall into the bosom of her mother, and through her to reduce the country itself to peaceful submission to the princes of West Saxony. As a first step to accomplish this purpose, he designed erecting a monastery on the site of his old hermitage, from whence, as from a great reservoir, would be poured out streams of missionaries among the people. His journey to Rome, its known object, and the events which had ensued upon it, added to his previous reputation, gave such publicity to his undertaking, that no sooner was it known to have commenced, than a very remarkable success at once attended it. "Many of the wealthiest nobles forsook the world, and chose with him a life of voluntary hardship and poverty. Many brought their children to him, entreating earnestly that these at least might find a refuge in his flock from the storms and troubles of this wretched world, and be nourished up for the life

eternal." The charity of the neighbouring people provided them with lands, which were kept in cultivation by the lay brothers, for the support of the monastery, and to supply the wants of the neighbouring poor. And here, under the eye of the holy Saint, were bred up those faithful children of the Church Catholic who spread her truth with such success, that we hear no more of Cornish schism ; and but a few years after, the whole West peacefully submitted themselves to the rule of a bishop sent by Saxon Edward. In spite however, of this success abroad, and indeed his general popularity, St. Neot had difficulties of a private nature to contend with, which gave yet further occasion for the interference of providence for his protection. The fierce prince of Liskeard beheld with no small displeasure the rapid growth of a religious, and above all, a Saxon rival, in his immediate neighbourhood. His Briton blood boiled with indignation, to see his enemy thus eating away the very root and core of his own authority, and attracting so unaccountably the hearts and affections of his subjects. From his ignorance of the secret of St. Neot's influence, he was at a loss which way to oppose him. Open personal violence he could not venture upon ; so that he had recourse instead, to a system of galling and tyrannical oppression of the inferior brethren of the House of Neotstowe. He maintained that he had a right to the secular service of all his subjects, and would forcibly compel them to leave their own work and labour for him. They cultivated his soil, attended his cattle, and, like slaves, were made to engage in the most menial service. Now as many of these brethren were members of the noblest British families, chiefs, and the sons of chiefs, and, like himself, descendants of Cadwallon, it may be sup-

posed such treatment was no little trial of their Christian fortitude ; and indeed it was intended to alienate their affections from their new master, who was unable or unwilling to protect them. So matters went on till one harvest time, when, as usual, they were forced into the prince's fields, to carry his corn for him. It was a very large harvest ; they had loaded many wagons, and were driving them home. The road lay along a narrow ridge, with a precipice on one side sheer down into the river. Exactly as they reached this point, a violent squall springing up from the north-west, suddenly catching the carts, overthrew them with all their load at once into the river, where they were totally destroyed. Such an event could not fail of its effect. The prince regarded it as a judgment ; as an intimation that if he persisted in his tyranny, worse might befall him. He withdrew his opposition, and from that day forward never interfered again with the dependants of St. Neot. On another occasion, the cupidity of a band of robbers was attracted by the lonely unprotected situation of the monastery, and they carried off the cattle which were used for the plough. The servants went out as usual to work, in the morning, but came back in dismay to their master, and told him they could find no oxen ; the door of the stable was open, and they were gone. He told them not to be down-hearted, but to return to the field and wait the issue. They obeyed disconsolately ; their plough was now useless to them, and they were counting the weary hours they must spend in digging over that rough field, when on lifting up their eyes, they saw four beautiful stags standing by it, and gracefully bending their heads over the yoke. Hardly venturing to approach, they gazed in mute astonishment, but the creatures' quiet

gentle manner showed so plainly they were waiting for the yoke to be laid upon their necks, that at last they ventured to go up and harness them ; without sign of fear or resistance, they submitted with the most willing gracefulness, and all that day and all the next, they toiled at their unwonted labour. Far and wide spread this strange story, and among those that heard of it, were the very thieves who had been the occasion of the miracle. Frantic with terror, not knowing what might be in store for them, when such means were taken to repair the mischief they had done, they hurried humbly to the feet of St. Neot, to confess their sin and restore his property. And he received them and forgave them, and they in their zeal and sorrow besought him that he would yet take further pity on them ; they feared to return to the world, lest their old habits return upon them, and the devil regain the mastery over their souls ; they would stay where they were, under the shadow of the Saint, and become the servants of him whom they had injured : and so it was ; and these violent and lawless men became numbered among the faithful and the obedient, and in time were raised to office in the sacred ministry. “ Such,” exclaims his biographer, with a glow of enthusiasm, “ was the wonderful power of this holy Saint. He saved the oxen from the thieves, the stags from their savage nature, and the thieves themselves from the power of the devil.” And the stags went back to their wood and became free again, but they never forgot their lesson of humility, and carried to their deaths upon their bodies the marks of what had befallen them ; and long years after were seen young fawns, sporting in the forests of Liskeard, with the white ring *where the yoke had pressed their ancestors, yet visible on their necks.*

SECTION V.

ALFRED AND NEOT.

TEN years before parted the two royal brethren, Alfred and St. Neot. They were now to meet again ; and one, alas, how changed ! Then we saw prince Alfred in the glow of young enthusiasm, arming himself for the fight, and setting out right nobly on the christian warrior's course, high in hope and rich in friends, and in the favour of God and man ; now he comes back, a proud, self-willed, overbearing monarch, his subjects discontented at home, a fierce foe pressing on him from without, seeking counsel of his long-neglected brother. His father was dead, his three brothers all dead, and these two stood alone, the sole surviving descendants of the illustrious Cerdic. And one was speedily to be gathered to his fathers, and on the other was the wrath of God to be poured out, and he was to be purified in the furnace of adversity. Long years after, he related to his friend and confessor, bishop Asser, the stories of his youth ; and he, as a warning for those in time to come, recorded the history of the sin and of its punishment.

“ Not victory only over his enemies, and success in difficulty, did God think fit to send on him, but He permitted him often to be worn down by his enemies, afflicted with adversities, depressed by the contempt of his own subjects, that he might know that there is one Lord of all, to whom every knee must bow, in whose hand are the hearts of kings, who putteth down the *mighty* from their seat, and exalteth the humble ; who

willeth sometimes that his faithful servants, while prosperous, shall be struck with the scourge of adversity ; that in depression they may not despair of the mercy of God, and when exalted to honour they may not be puffed up, but may know to whom is due all that they possess. This adversity indeed which befell the king, came not on him undeservedly ; because in the beginning of his reign, when he was yet young and inexperienced, such men of his kingdom as came to him requiring assistance in their difficulties, and such as were oppressed by those in authority and demanded justice at his hands, he refused to listen to, or render them any assistance, but took no account of them at all. For this did that most blessed Saint Neotus, his nearest kinsman, while yet alive in the flesh, grieve from the bottom of his heart, and his prophetic spirit foretold what must befall him for his misconduct. Nevertheless, he regarded not the reproof of the man of God, and refused to receive his words. Because, therefore, whatever sins man doth commit must of necessity be punished either in this world or in the world to come, the true and holy Judge would not that this folly of the king should go unpunished in this present life, to the end, that he might spare him in the strict account hereafter."

How sad is the meeting between two brothers, or men who for any other reason have been very dear to each other, when one has gone astray ! Sin has thrown a broad gulf between their hearts, over which there is no other bridge but penitence. Till then there can be no more sympathy, no more confidence—remembering what he once was, the presence of the friend of purer days adds poignancy to the remorse of the guilty one. *His proud spirit chafes at the degradation he cannot*

chuse but feel. He seeks refuge from himself in an assumption of reserve and haughtiness, and anger at the reproaches he imagines he sees in every word and glance, closes the avenues to better feelings. And the other,—grief is all the feeling he can have. His affections yearn for the lost one, but they may not reapproach him except through God by prayer. While his heart is bursting, his stern sense of duty forces him to master it. Cold grave rebuke, advice, instruction, is all he may give, but all more sternly far than if they had never been to each other what they were. He may not trust himself to be gentle.

So met Alfred and St. Neot, not as brothers, not in the confiding affectionateness of mutual love ; but as Saul came to Samuel, an unrepentant king to a saint and prophet ; to ask a blessing, to receive a rebuke. First instruction and counsel were tried. “The Saint entertained him honourably, for as much as he was his prince ; but because he governed not his people aright, because he was haughty and forbidding in his manners, and his rule austere and harsh—for these things did the blessed Neot rebuke him and teach him what was the duty of a Christian king.” And it appears that for a time at least his slumbering conscience was awakened, for “he went to his house in awe and great fear ; and from that time forward came frequently to see the Saint, and seek from him advice and counsel.”

Some men, when their hearts condemn them, seek to forget themselves ; like Ahab who hated Micaiah because he prophesied evil concerning him, they fear God’s presence and shrink from every thing which reminds them of Him. These men are cowards, but men of nobler natures, even while unrepentant and yet in *their sins*, still will not wholly renounce their alle-

giance. Though fallen, they dare look round them and see where they stand. They know their state, but they do not rest contented in it. Therefore they will not yet cast off the last rope of their moorings ; and while they have not energy enough to restrain their passions, they seem still to seek the presence of those who they know will not spare their censures. So Saul clung to Samuel, so Joash to Elisha, so Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel. And so now though "he departed not yet from the evil of his doings," king Alfred came often to see his brother.

At length came the last earthly interview, and the prophecy of final vengeance.

"It came to pass on a day that the king went as he was wont to see the man of God ; who, when he came to him, among many other things, rebuked him again for his misconduct. He set before him the pains of eternal fire, and showed how that those who are mighty upon earth shall hereafter mightily be tormented. And besides this, in the spirit of prophecy, he foretold to him all which should befall him afterwards. 'Thou seest, O king, what now thou sufferest from thine enemies, and thou shalt suffer more hereafter ; for in thy kingdom thou art proud and tyrannical, whereas before the eyes of the Divine Majesty thou oughtest rather with the king and prophet David to have shown thyself meek and humble. Therefore by a foreign nation that knoweth not Christ, thou shalt be driven thence. Alone thou shalt escape from thine enemies, and shalt lie concealed under the hands of God, and so for thy sins thou shalt remain many days. Nevertheless I have obtained for thee by my prayers, that if thou wilt turn from thine iniquities, God will yet have mercy on thee and restore thee to thy state and sceptre. Now there-

fore take thou more wholesome counsel for thyself and people, and send men to Rome with presents for our most reverend Father there, and entreat him that he will of his clemency be pleased to remit the tax upon the English School. And behold I go the way of all flesh : our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to me that I am soon to depart hence. Now therefore when Divine Providence shall have fulfilled its purpose concerning thee, and shall have rightly punished thee for thy misdeeds, then be thou of good heart, and put thy trust in Him who ruleth all things, and pray for His assistance ; and the Almighty God, by me his servant, shall hear thy prayers and restore thee again to thy place.' ”

And now the day was spent, the evening was come. He had finished his course, he had wrought his work, and St. Neot was to die. He lived not to see the final success of his mission, but the word was gone out, the seed was sown, and in its own good time the fruit came to perfection. Such is ever the lot of God's workmen. They sow and others reap, they lay the foundation, others build the superstructure. A work which is to endure must be done in faith ; and the workman receives his reward, but not on earth. The monastery of Neotstowe was but in its infancy when its founder died ; but to this day men pray and praise in the house which he provided them, and in his own saintly crown in heaven shines the bright jewel of the recovered Church of the West.

Soon after his last interview with king Alfred, St. Neot was attacked by fever. He had been told before that his course was ended, and he knew that this illness was the signal of his departure. But one thing remained for him, once more to receive the Holy Communion, and then straightway in the presence of the

assembled brethren, amidst the pealing of loud anthems and prayers ascending round him up to heaven, he surrendered his soul to God.

With solemn pomp and fear his body was committed to the earth. Gloriously, as when at evening light clouds flock together to gaze at the departing sun, and his last rays as they fall on them bathe them in unutterable splendour, were shed the last influences of this holy man on those who crowded to his funeral. For the houses where Saints have had their dwelling place are holy as they were holy. Those temples which so large a measure of God's Spirit has deigned to hallow by its presence, become impregnated by its blessed influence, and are not as those of other men. The spirit returns to Him who gave it, and the body to the dust ; but it is ransomed from the power of corruption ; though it dissolves it decays not. The natural body shrinks and shrivels up like decaying leaves. These holy tabernacles in decomposing shed round them fragrance, like the flowers of paradise.

Multitudes of persons from all quarters came together to take a last farewell of the person of their beloved St. Neot, and all who came within the power of the rich odour which exhaled from him as he lay there, became divinely refreshed in soul and body. Those who had diseases were healed every one ; they needed not so much as to touch the body ; they gazed upon it, and the evil spirit which tormented them fled away in terror and dismay. Those that he won at his death were more than those whom he won when he was living ; and in a short time the number of persons who craved admittance to his monastery became so great that it was necessary to enlarge the Church. On this occasion the body was moved " with great care and trem-

bling ; with long watchings, and fasting and prayer, it was taken from the place where it was first laid, and re-buried on the north side of the high altar, where it now lies. Again, when it was exposed, the same rich fragrance issued from it and filled the Church, and again did those holy relics answer to the devout approaches of the diseased by an immediate cure. And for the merits of the same most holy Saint, the favour and blessing of Almighty God yet rested on that spot, and ceased not to be poured forth there in answer to the prayers of the faithful."

SECTION VI.

THE DANES.

FROM the deep dungeons of Ella of Northumberland, where serpents were writhing round him and fastening their envenomed fangs into his flesh, rose the death chaunt of Ragnar Lodbrog. Far over the wide waves rolled the wild notes to the chamber of the Scalld Aslauga, his sorceress consort. Swift sped she the spear messenger among the fierce vikingr ; and the nobles of Norway and of Denmark vowed a terrible revenge. Three kings and nine earls joined their forces to the sons of the murdered monarch, and the most mighty armament that had ever left the shores of the Baltic, now set sail for Northumberland. North and south, east and west England was to be laid desolate ; the hated name of Christian was to be blotted out, and *Odin's* recreant slaves forced again to bend before the

God of their ancestors. Hinguar and Hubba for revenge, Guthrum, Healfden and Bagsar for booty and conquest, and all maddened with savage superstition, fell like a pack of howling wolves on the forces of Northumberland. The enchanted standard of the Raven, woven in one summer noon by Ragnar's daughters, floated in the van, and the foul bird, animated by some infernal spirit, snuffed the coming carnage and croaked and clapped its wings. The troops of the Saxons were scattered like chaff. The murderous tyrant Ella was flayed alive and flung a prey to the eagle and the kite. The prophecy of Alcuin was terribly fulfilled. The iniquity of the wretched Saxons was now full, and vengeance drew a bloody pen across the appalling amount.

And yet the most awful part of such national inflictions is, that not the guilty only perish, but the indiscriminating wave of calamity sweeps all alike before it, the innocent with the wicked. On the monasteries fell most heavily the Danish fury. They were reputed rich ; they were defenceless ; above all, in them lay the vital spirit of Christianity. Scarce one through all England escaped. It would be sickening to follow their course ; the scenes are of too uniformly horrible a character. Yet some few instances of Christian heroism flash out and call for eternal honour. The nunnery of Coldingham lay in the path of the Danes, and full well knew Ebba, the abbess, that worse than death awaited her flock. What were they to do ? Escape they could not ; die by their own hands they might not. She called the sisterhood together. It was after vespers, and the Danes would be there the next morning. She said she knew of but one way ; she would set them the example, they might follow if they would.

Their beauty was their worst enemy ; destroy that and they were safe. She drew a knife from under her robe, and herself severed her nose and lips. In silence all followed her terrible example. The savage spoiler came for his prey ; but when they looked for beauty, to satiate their foul lust, they found but hideous and ghastly figures, foul with blood. Back rushed the baffled fiends, in mingled fear and loathing, and in their disappointed fury, burnt that noble band of immaculates in the fires of their own abbey. Some gallant stands were made in Mercia and East Anglia. Priests and monks buckled on their armour, and went out to the battle to be slain. Burrhed, of Mercia, fled to Rome, and St. Edmund, of East Anglia, was barbarously murdered. The monks of Croyland, with Prior Toly, went out and fought desperately, but they were all destroyed, and the monastery, with all its occupants, reduced to a heap of ashes. Abbot Theodore fell like a Christian warrior ; he was slaughtered at his own altar, celebrating mass. Of all the kingdoms of the Oc-tarchy, Wessex alone remained untouched. Had Alfred but continued firm and steadfast, as he had begun, who can tell but it might have yet been spared ? But even this great prince too, for a while forgot himself. St. Neot's warnings were despised, and now his threat-enings were to be accomplished. For six years of his reign, the stroke was delayed by the long-suffering of God. At length it fell. By a long course of tyranny and injustice, and perhaps even worse crimes, (for these are hinted at) Alfred, once the darling of West Saxony, had alienated the affections of his people, and now he was only hated and despised. In the spring of the year 877, the armies of the Danes came down upon him : his subjects deserted him, and submitted every-

where to the invaders : he found himself, without striking a blow, a fugitive and an outcast. St. Neot's prophecy was fulfilled ; he was driven for a time from the throne he had disgraced, and sunk to such abject misery, that at one time no one of his subjects knew where he was, or what had become of him.

In the marshes of Somersetshire, lay an island, formed by the alluvial deposit of the Thone and the Parret, of considerable extent ; a deep morass divided it from the mainland, and its sides were covered with a low rough copsewood ; the centre was open, and sufficiently large to find employment for a neatherd. No trace of it now remains. The soil has sunk ; the floods wash over the whole, but to Alfred it furnished a retreat from the pursuit of the Danes. Entirely alone, he presented himself at the neatherd's cottage ; he said he was an officer of the king's army, and requested the shelter of their roof, till better times enabled him to return to the world. Alfred's great error, as king, had been neglect of his poorer subjects. With a singular aptness of retribution, he was condemned to beg protection from one of the very poorest, and to receive it only on condition of his performing the most menial services for him. How hard a trial for one so little used to self-restraint ! And yet he bore it uncomplainingly ; and there was even worse in store for him. The neatherd's wife one day left him in charge of the cakes which were baking before the fire. Alfred's thoughts unfortunately wandered ; his charge was neglected, the cakes were burnt. The old woman had a tongue, and was not sparing in the use of it ; indeed, the legend says, she not only scolded, but struck the king ; but he submitted with the most patient resignation ; a sure proof that he was returning to himself

again. After this trial, the severest part of Alfred's punishment was remitted. He found means of communicating with a few of his friends : his wife and children joined him, and a small body of his followers. Together, they erected a fortification in the island, and supported themselves by fishing, and pillaging from the Danes. Marked as he had been by heaven from the first, he was not now deserted in his affliction. One holy Saint, while yet in the body, had foretold his downfall ; another, now in spirit, came to give him hopes of restoration. "Men have entertained angels unawares." One day in the depth of winter, his men being all out fishing, he was sitting reading with his wife, when a beggar knocked at the door, and entreated charity for Christ's sake. Their stock of food was scanty ; one loaf was all ; but Alfred took it, and breaking it in two, with the words, "Blessed be God in all his gifts," he gave half of it to the poor man, adding that He who could feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, would make that sufficient for his necessities. The beggar departed ; the king resumed his reading, and presently fell asleep. In a dream, the holy Cuthbert appeared to him ; he was the poor beggar ; he had been sent to try him whether he was indeed turned back from his evil ways. Nobly had Alfred borne the trial ; he should not lose his reward ; his restoration was at hand, and as a token that the vision was indeed true, a multitude of fish should attend the successful efforts of his servants. The king awoke : his people returned, wondering that in spite of the cold and severe frost their success had been so great. And the spring of the year 878 drew on, and he had now been nearly a year in exile, and St. Neot, the messenger of wrath, came to confirm the glad tidings.

Watchful and sleepless, the king was lying in his bed, when, by permission of the merciful God, His servant St. Neot appeared to him.

“Knowest thou not,” he said, “how vain are the thoughts of man. They who hope in the Lord shall take courage, they shall make to themselves wings as eagles, they shall fly and shall not faint. Now, therefore, up and be doing ; for thou shalt go forth to battle with these heathens, and the Lord shall be with thee, and they shall flee before thee. And king Guthrum and his nobles shall be humbled, and shall leave their idols and be baptized. And behold, I will go with thee, and with power from above I will lead thy forces to the battle, and they shall be victorious. The seventh week after Easter thou shalt go forth.

In the meantime, the Danes had been doing their work most fearfully. Hinguar and Hubba, like two incarnate fiends, had penetrated to Devonshire, sparing neither sex nor age, pillaging, slaying, and burning all before them : here, however, they met their first check. St. Edmund's blood, which cried aloud to heaven, was here to be avenged. Ragnar's fierce sons had run their course. The scanty remnant of the faithful Saxons were gathered with Odun, earl of Devon, in the castle of Cynuit. The place was without water ; and the camp of the Danes lay round it, secure of a bloodless victory. Providence, however, had ordered the issue otherwise. A fierce sally of the garrison, in the grey of a March morning, as desperate as it was unexpected, ended in the total rout of the Danish forces ; Hinguar and Hubba were destroyed by the sword of Odun, and the disenchanted raven, now lifeless, and with drooping wings, fell into the hands of the conquerors. By this defeat, however, the Danish

power was not materially weakened. The whole authority was now centred in the person of Guthrum, who lay with the large division of the army on the Downs, in Wiltshire. Fresh hordes were continually arriving from the Baltic to recruit their losses, and except from the spirit the Saxons had acquired from the success in Devonshire, Alfred seemed no nearer his throne than he had been the year preceding : he had received a promise, however, and he believed. And now Easter was past, and his adventurous spirit leading him to neglect no human means of success, in the disguise of a harper, he visited in person the Danish camp at Ethendun. He played and sung before Guthrum himself, and having made his observations, retired.

And then came Whitsuntide, "and the king rode forth to Brixton, to Egbert's rock on the eastern side of Selwood, and all Somersetshire, and all Wiltshire, and all the men of Hampshire, who had not fled beyond the sea, came forth to meet him, and when they saw him as it were come to life again, after so long eclipse, they were filled with unrestrainable rapture." For the tide had turned, the favour of God was coming back upon them, and those men whom we lately left desponding cowards, we welcome back the enthusiastic heroes prepared to do all or die. A refreshing change. Thus he found himself once more at the head of an army, and resolved at once to bring matters to an issue. Humanly speaking, success depended on the blow being struck swiftly and promptly, before the Danes were prepared to receive him, and he began his march immediately, in the second week in May, 878. The Danes were still at Ethendun, and he went directly *toward* them. About five miles west of the spot where

they lay, is the small village of Iley : here the Saxons halted, the night preceding the last battle ; and Alfred lay there in his tent, and again, as before, appeared the venerable figure of St. Neot.

“ His form was like an angel of God ; his hair was white as snow ; his garments glistening, and fragrant of the odours of heaven ; he brought armour with him, and thus addressed the king :—‘ Rise up in haste, and prepare for victory ; when thou camest hither, I was with thee, I supported thee ; now, therefore, on the morrow go forth, thou and thy men of war, to the fight, and the Lord shall be with you, even the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, who giveth victory to kings. And behold, I go before you to the battle, and thy enemies shall fall by thy arm before mine eyes, and thou shalt smite them with the edge of the sword.’ ”

On the eastern slope of the high range of hills which rise from the valley of the Avon, lay the camp of the Danes ; so rapid, so energetic, had been Alfred’s movements, that he himself brought the tidings of his rising, and no hint of danger had reached them to disturb their quiet. There lay the vast army wrapped in negligent repose. The morning mist hung like a dull heavy curtain over the camp. The damp pennons drooped upon their staffs. The drowsy sentinels were slumbering at their posts. Not a watch-dog barked, not a note of alarm was given, while troop after troop of the Saxons defiled silently over the brow of the hill, and took their station on the summit of the slope. Foremost rode king Alfred : his small army was now all disposed for the charge, and he briefly and impressively addressed them. “ Heavily,” he said, “ has the scourge of God fallen on us for our sins. Our homes

are desolate, our fields wasted, our holy places are destroyed, our priests are fled, and the hands of these heathen hounds run red with the blood of our dearest kinsmen. We have suffered, we have been forgiven. The day of retribution is come. We alone remain of all the armies of West Saxony ; but we are not alone, for God is with us. He has said, and will he not perform ? This day shall the heathen be delivered into your hands. On now, therefore, ye servants of the Most High ! For your God and for your country, for your hearths and for your homes, fall on and spare not !” A thousand voices rent the sky,—“ The Lord shall give strength to His people. Blessed be God.” A thousand swords flashed back the red rays of the rising sun. The mist rolled off ; streamed out proudly the royal standard in the morning breeze, and down like a mountain torrent crashed the Saxons on their foe. At that first awful shout, each slumbering Dane had started into life in terrified surprise. At the first fierce rush they fled in panic and fell in heaps under the sword of the destroyer ; yet among their vast hosts Alfred’s army was but as a small river to the broad ocean, and their scattered bands soon rallied with desperate fury. Hell sent her spirits to their aid, the Yotuns came flashing through the air, and Loki rode upon his dragon steed and fought for Guthrum, and backwards and forwards swayed the tide of the battle.

What awful figure is that which has seized king Alfred’s standard, and waves the Saxons on with majestic hand ? Aslauga’s demons knew the servant of the Mighty One, and fled back howling to their icy prisons. Terror struck their weapons from the hands of the Pagans ; they dared not look on him, but fled on every side. None saw him come ; none save Alfred knew

hence he was ; but there stood Neot, once more upon field of battle in the same terrific majesty as the king before had seen him. High he waved the royal standard, marshalling the Saxons on to victory. Fierce and fast they followed on their fainting foe, and gave no quarter. The measure they had dealt to others was now dealt to them. Thousands upon thousands lay dead ; but still pressed on that fearful standard bearer, and thousands were yet to fall. And the sun rolled on to the west through that long May day, and made no comment. It went down, and that terrible carnage had not ceased which has left so imperishable a record in the memory of the Wiltshire peasant, that none ever now pass Slaughter-ford without a shudder and a prayer. Never again was Neot seen on earth.

A merry peal rung out from the bells of Wedmore,¹ and fast came crowding in the people from all the country round ; for this was the glad day when God's servants in all the earth meet together to acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity ; and to offer prayers for the defence of the true faith of the Church of Christ, for ever and ever. And this day too in England were to be offered public thanksgivings to God for its great deliverance from the heathen. Scattered on the plain before the town lay the tents of the Saxon army, and smiled in the bright sunshine ; and banners were waving, and all were dressed in holiday array and looked blithe and happy. Nature had dressed herself in her gayest suit, the earth looked greener, the birds rolled more lively ; all creation seemed to have

¹ There is reason to think *Westminster* is the place intended by this word.

joined together in one glad tribute of thanksgiving. The great Church was thronged with people ; knights and earls, and all the chivalry of West Saxony were gathered in the aisles for the festival, and to witness the great offering which was to be made there that day. Priests and Bishops so long lain in hiding places for fear of the Danes, had come forth again, and now stood in their white robes before the altar. Breathless were they all with expectation, as the great west door rolled back, and the procession appeared. Two and two, with slow and solemn step, a long row of men whose garb announced them candidates for holy baptism, advanced towards the font, king Alfred leading them ; and every heart beat high, and every eye was fixed on that down-cast man who walked hand in hand with him. There was not one of them who knew not the fierce monarch of the Danes, whose ear had not tingled at the name of Guthrum : his head was bare ; the raven plume so fearfully familiar amidst scenes of slaughter and desolation, no longer waved over that princely forehead ; the eye that had flashed forth lightning fires, now beamed with the mild light of penitence and hope. Thirty of Norway's boldest sons attended him, with like demeanour of submission, and the whole train arranged themselves round the font, and knelt and prayed. Then, from beside the high altar, rose the noble bishop Wulfen, and swept majestically down the aisle, through the wondering multitude, until he reached the kneeling group. With stately step he passed within the circle, and stood beside the font, while with one consent, these haughty warriors forswore their gods, and made profession of the Christian faith. Alfred stood sponsor for the king, and the bishop sprinkled him with the water of purification, and signed him with

the sign of the cross, and he rose up from the ground, Guthrum no longer, but Christian Athelstan. Athelstan, of all names the dearest to Alfred, as that which had once belonged to his deliverer, now he chose for his reconciled enemy, in the hope it might bring a blessing on him. In like manner, the thirty warriors were admitted into the Church of Christ, and then all turned and took the oath of fealty to England's sovereign ; Danes and Saxons, joined in Christian brotherhood, swore eternal peace, and loud pealed the organ at that joyful sight, and from all the multitude assembled, swelled up with one consent to the everlasting God a hymn of gratitude and joy.

A LEGEND OF

St. Bartholomew,

HERMIT AT FARNE, A. D. 1193.

ANY one who reads the Prophets will see that, while all that relates to the humiliation of our most Blessed Lord is most literally fulfilled, the accomplishment of those prophecies which foretell the external glories of His Church is a matter of faith. Where is the kingdom of peace, of justice and righteousness which was to trample upon the oppressor and the warrior? The Church is all this imperfectly, and in tendency; the wickedness of man has spoilt for a time the work of God. But notwithstanding all this misery, the prophecies of Christ's kingdom have found a more complete accomplishment in Christ's Saints, who have all been peaceful, compassionate and zealous for justice. Kings and warriors have literally bowed down before the Saints who have taken up against them the cause of the poor and the widow. And so it may be also that other parts of prophecy, which are commonly interpreted figuratively, have received in a measure a literal fulfilment. For instance, those parts of scripture which relate to the animal creation may have been fulfilled much more literally than is commonly supposed, in some of Christ's hidden Saints who have given up all for His

sake. In proportion as the knowledge of the Lord has filled the earth, so also may Christ's little ones have walked unharmed among beasts of prey, or by their gentleness won to their sides the shyest of the inhabitants of the forest or the rock. If Christ's servants have for His sake dwelt in "the habitation of dragons and the court of owls,"¹ where "the wild beasts of the desert meet the wild beasts of the island," what wonder if "the beasts of the field have honoured them, the dragons and the owls,"² "the cormorant and the bittern."³ He who dwells for Christ's sake in the desert, "where the satyrs cry unto their fellows," in the dry places where he seeks rest who can find none, must not be surprised if he sees strange shapes and hears startling sounds. And many of the words and actions of our blessed Lord seem to show that it is dangerous to pronounce too soon that the language of scripture is figurative, while at the same time they show such a strange connexion between evil spirits and the animal creation, that power over the one would seem to imply a power over the other. During those wonderful days which he spent in the wilderness, he was with the wild beasts as well as with devils. He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, and with His leave beings who had once been angels entered into the filthiest of beasts. So also the eyes of His Saints may have been opened to see the shame of the fallen archangel; and what wonder if under shapeless and uncouth forms he strives to scare from his knees the Saint whose prayers and fasts abridge his usurped dominion.

So also other prophecies connected with the opening of the invisible world upon the Saints, may have been

¹ Is. xi. 6. ² Is. xxxiv. 13, 14. ³ Is. xviii. 20. Is. xxxiv. 11.

more literally fulfilled than is commonly believed. has been foretold that the sons and daughters of the Church should prophesy, that the young men should see visions and the old men dream dreams ; we need not therefore be startled at meeting with such things in the history of Christendom in any age. It is true indeed that from the moment that our blessed Lord disappeared from the sight of the disciples, that became an object of faith which before had been seen and handled, even the glorified body of Him who is at the right hand of God ; yet we know that He has been pleased to show Himself in the reality of that body to His apostles, Paul and St. John. Nay one day every eye shall see Him ; there is therefore nothing contrary to faith supposing that even He may have appeared in vision to His Saints.

All these openings of the invisible world, whether good or of evil beings, are of course subject to the present imperfection of our nature, and yet this does not interfere with the reality of them. Our notions of the ever-blessed Trinity are most dark and imperfect, embodied in human words and human ideas, and yet this does not prevent there being in them a truth real and objective, which we know can be as little the creation of our mind as material things which we see and touch. Again there have been false Christs and false teachers yet there is also the One True Christ with the holy Doctors of the Church. The visions seen and the voices heard by the Saints are expressed in terms, to speak, of Time and Space to which we are at present bound, so that it is often hard to distinguish them from the phantoms of imagination. The clear spiritual vision which the Saints possess habitually, may enable *them* to discern heavenly things so vividly that the

meditations may sometimes take the nature of ecstasy, without its being possible to fix the exact limits where contemplation ends and vision begins. Again noises are heard in the stillness of the night, which are drowned in the busy hum of day ; and they may have been mistaken for supernatural sounds ; the chill night air may have cramped the limbs of a Saint as he knelt on the cold stones before an altar, and he may have attributed it to the agency of the wicked one. He may in these instances have been sometimes right and at other times wrong, but it would be foolish and faithless to reject at once the notion that the devil had troubled a Saint at his prayers. Here at least we cannot weigh our enlightened *experience* against the testimony of a superstitious monk in a benighted age, for what experience have we of nights spent on the cold ground in prayer ? As well might the Indian prince urge the experience of his tender limbs against the fact that the hardy Englishman ever has to bear the pinching of ice and snow. Again let no one trouble himself about the danger of fanaticism ; these are not practical questions to us ; when we have hermits and monks amongst us, then let us begin to be anxious about drawing the line between false visions and true.

All this is a fitting introduction to the life of a Saint which contains in it many startling and even grotesque stories, which yet rest on contemporary authority. No flaw is to be found in dates,⁴ and many personages flit

* The date of St. Bartholomew's death is remarkably fixed by the circumstance mentioned in his life, that he died in a year on which the Feast of St. John Baptist was on the seventh Thursday after Ascension-day, which must therefore have fallen on the sixth of May, and Easter on the twenty-eighth of March.

across the wild scene who appear elsewhere as beings of flesh and blood in the pages of history. The life of St. Bartholomew is written by a monk, who mentions several persons from whom he had heard what he relates, and who had got their intelligence from the lips of the Saint himself. The stories rest on various authorities, some on the testimony of the fishermen who lived on his island, others on that of friends ; but it is time that the reader should judge himself.

1. *Brother Bartholomew in the world.*

Among the hermits of the twelfth century, Bartholomew is a remarkable personage ; his character stands out clear and distinct amidst the strange tales told about him, one not unvarying. We may feel startled and disgusted that such a figure with an ill smell of goatskins should come betwixt the wind and our civility ; but, turn away as we will, there he still stands to reproach our sloth and luxury, the genuine prodig

This only happened twice in the twelfth century, viz. in 1118 and 1193. Thus far the Bollandists : but the date is still rather fixed to 1193 by the fact that he was forty-two years and six months in the island of Farne ; now if he had died in 1185 he would have left Durham in 1140, which cannot be, as it is expressly stated that he quitted the monastery under Prior Laurence, who did not succeed to the office till 1149. There is a manuscript in the Bodleian Library in which the life of Saint is inscribed by the author, to Bertram, Prior of Durham. This proves that the life was written under the very Prior whose time the Saint died. The same manuscript gives the name of the author at full length, and verifies the conjecture of the Bollandists that it was Galfridus.

of an age of faith. He was not always St. Bartholomew ; his parents, whose condition is unknown, gave him the name of Tosti. He was born at Whitby, in Yorkshire, in the early part of the twelfth century. The north of England in the reign of our early Norman kings, was the stronghold of all that was Saxon ; this circumstance, as well as his name, makes it probable that he was of old English blood ; but his companions laughed at the quaint sound of the Saxon boy's name, and his parents changed it for the Norman name of William. In his boyhood and youth he was of a wild and stubborn character, brought on probably by the jests of his playfellows, and he cared but little about spiritual things. Our blessed Lord however did not leave him without warning. One night he dreamed that he was in a place of surpassing beauty, and that there rose before him an intense light, like a cloud of dazzling white, or the dawn of a beautiful day. As he gazed on its splendour, he saw our blessed Lord standing on high, and near Him Mary His mother, and the apostles Peter and John. Then the blessed Virgin looked upon him with a sweet countenance and bade the Apostles lead him to her. When he stood before her who was called by Christ the mother of His beloved disciple, and who is the mother of all whom He has loved eternally, then with a sweet voice she said to him, Follow thou the steps of my Son, that He may have pity on thee, and pray humbly to Him who is merciful. Then William fell on his face and cried three times, Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me ; and the Lord lifted up His hand and blessed him. Twice did this vision appear to him in his sleep, and once when he was awake ; but great as was the impression *made upon his mind, it bore no open fruit till many*

years after. Instead of seeking quiet in the bosom of a monastery, his spirit was still restless and untamed. He left his country, and in quest of adventures went into Norway, then the refuge of many discontented spirits of Saxon blood.⁵ He had not long been there however, when he put himself under the direction of a priest of the country, and made such spiritual progress under him, that the Bishop of the place ordained him priest. Still there was much in him to subdue ; his spirit was one which delighted to wrestle with the storms which howl through the forests of those savage regions, and his curiosity was roused by the dark superstitions which lingered among them. He was once walking with a youth, who suddenly exclaimed that he saw an evil spirit. Friend, I would fain see him, was the answer of the priest. The youth said, Put thy feet upon mine, that thou touch not the ground, and thou shalt see him not only now but always. Then William laughed aloud when he thought of the strange companion which his friend wished to provide for him. He afterwards used to relate that he bethought himself just in time that his faith would be in danger, if he, a Christian priest, had an evil spirit ever before his eyes. This seems to have contributed to sober his mind, and he began to think of settling in life, as it is called. The marriage of priests, though forbidden by the canons, was not then so uncommon as it afterwards became ; and he cast his eyes on one of the fair damsels of Norway. The maiden smiled upon him, and the father favoured his suit, but Christ had other views for

⁵ Simeon Dunelm. in. ann. 1074. The same authority states that *English* priests were in great request in Norway.

His servant, and from some unknown cause, he left Norway unmarried.

Three years had passed over him since he quitted his native country, and he came back to it a priest and an altered man ; and almost as soon as he had landed in England he for a few days officiated in a Church in Northumberland. Still however he had not found his place in Christ's kingdom ; the vision with which his Lord had favoured him in his youth rushed upon his mind. This seemed to mark him out for some extraordinary mode of life, and with the energy which ever characterized him, he at once set out for Durham, where he entered as a novice the Cathedral monastery. Here when with his newly shaven head and his Benedictine habit, he entered the Church with the rest of the novices, and as was the custom at Durham, prostrated himself before the high altar ; it seemed as if the figure on the crucifix stretched out its arms to welcome this new soldier of the cross. The name which he took in religion was Bartholomew, after the holy Apostle, and he soon won the hearts of the brethren by the gentleness which now appeared in his character, and by his fervour at the divine office. He had remained for a year in the monastery, training up his soul to obedience and humility, when he was called away to another and a sterner scene. St. Cuthbert appeared to him one night in a dream, and bade him go to the island of Farne to lead the life of a hermit. Next morning he enquired of the brethren where this island lay, for he had never heard of it. He then went to Prior Laurence and begged for leave to quit the monastery, to live henceforth on that spot where St. Cuthbert lived and died. The good Prior shook his head : *a hermit's life was not one for a novice, nor was*

Farne so pleasant an abode as one who had never seen it might fancy. Brother Bartholomew's earnestness however at length prevailed, and with the Prior's leave, and the prayers of the convent, he set out for his new abode, early in December, 1151, and in the first week of Advent.

2. *Of the isle in which brother Bartholomew lived.*

If ever monks had a prospect of happiness, it was the monks of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert at Durham. The lazy old canons had been expelled and provided for elsewhere to make room for them, and the discipline of their monastery was at its height under a holy and learned Prior. The munificence of kings and Bishops had placed them above secular cares ; streams were bridged over, mills erected, and fish ponds dug, for their sole use.⁶ Villages were assigned to them,⁷ where dwelt forty merchants to supply their wants, free of all the customs and tolls paid to the Bishop. Splendid buildings were rising about them on every side, and their chapter house had been but lately finished for their use.⁸ Their altars blazed with gold and jewels, and on the high altar was a famous crucifix, adorned with gems by William the Conqueror. A greater contrast to this religious house than Bartholomew's new dwelling place can hardly be conceived. The island of Farne is described⁹ as a circle of solid rock, the top of which is thinly strewn over with a layer of barren soil.

⁶ See for instance the account of Ralph Flambard's works, *Anglia Sac.* p. 708.

⁷ *Cart. ap. Dugdale*, vol. i. p. 237.

⁸ *Anglia Sac.* vol. i. 709.

⁹ This account applies only to the times of Galfridus.

On its south side it is separated by a channel of about two miles in breadth from the shore ; to the east and west a belt of rocks protect it from the fury of the sea, while on the north it lies open to the whole force of the waves, in the midst of which it lies like the broken and defenceless hull of a shipwrecked vessel. Sometimes when the tide rises higher than usual, and the wild storms of that rugged coast come in to its aid, the waves make an inroad on the land, and the salt foam is blown over the whole island, wetting the shivering inhabitant to the skin, and penetrating the crevices of his habitation. Near the shelving beach which formed the landing-place, was a low hut of unhewn stone and turf, built by St. Cuthbert. A narrow path leads up through the rock into St. Cuthbert's chapel ; it was situated in a hollow so shut in on all sides by walls of naked rock, that nothing could be seen from thence of the wide waste of waters around, or of the landward prospect on the other side. St. Cuthbert was said by his own labour to have deepened the hollow, so that when he knelt in prayer he could see nothing but the blue sky, bright with stars, far over his head, or resting with its lowering clouds on the edge of this rocky chamber. Here also by his prayers a clear stream gushed from the hard rock, according to the promise of the Lord that He would give waters in the wilderness, and that it should spring forth to give drink to His people, to His chosen. Rough as was the material of which the island was formed, two springs welled from the depths of the rock, to which the sailors often came to water their ships ; and this seems to have been the only natural production on the spot, which could be obtained without toil. This unpromising place was not likely to attract inhab-

itants or visitors, and pirates, sailors and fishermen seem to have been its chief occasional inmates.

Besides the drawbacks which have been mentioned, the place had an ill name, which would of itself have kept it lonely. It was said by the people of the country to be haunted. The islets around it were especially said to be the habitation of demons, and no fisherman would have dared to moor his skiff to them after night-fall. On one islet all shipwrecked mariners were buried, and there above all, the howls of evil spirits were said to have been heard mingling with the rise and fall of the blasts which swept over the long grass upon their graves. Here also amidst the fantastic wreaths of mist, the fishermen used to see strange figures clad in the hoods of monks, and with long beards pendant from their foul features, riding on goats and brandishing spears among the tombs ; till crosses were planted in the sand all round the spot, and the demons as soon as they saw them, flitted around and wheeled away into the darkness. It is hard to say why demons should be supposed to haunt the graves of Christian mariners, but there were other and better reasons for thinking that the hermits of St. Cuthbert's isle were disturbed in their devotions by evil spirits. Christian corpses were more likely to scare away than to invite devils ; but Satan would have an object in frightening away the Saint whose prayers were a thorn in his side. "He who," says the old monk, whose narrative we follow, "is led by the Spirit into this wilderness, must of necessity be tempted by the devil, and either practise himself in virtue, or quit this place which is made for virtue." The advance of Christianity had scared away the evil one, so that he hid himself *in these lonely islets*, as he had retired into the sandy

deserts of the Thebais, to the wonderful rock of St. Michael in Normandy, or the shaggy wood from the depths of which he was driven by St. Seine.

3. *How Bartholomew lived in his hermitage.*

Bartholomew did not find himself alone in his new abode ; a monk named Ebwin had established himself there before him. He had probably also belonged to the convent of Durham, the authorities of which were still the spiritual superiors of the hermits of Farne. From this person the new inmate obtained by no means a hearty welcome ; he was so much of a hermit that he would have no one to share his solitude, not even another hermit. Very few men can bear to be alone ; and without a special vocation, none should make the attempt. Even our blessed Lord did not go into the wilderness without being led thither by the Spirit. Many men however from fanaticism, and wilfulness, or because their temper has been soured by the ill treatment of the world, have lived and died in solitude. This is one of the strange freaks of ill-guided human nature, and can only be distinguished from religious loveliness by its fruits. Ebwin could live alone, but he could not bear to have a rival in his loneliness. He troubled Bartholomew's peace by bitter taunts, intending to tease him into anger, or to scare him away altogether. He however failed in his object ; a few years before he might have succeeded, but Bartholomew had learned to discipline himself to patience and meekness in the monastery of Durham. His patient endurance wore out the obstinacy of his companion ; the island could well have supported both, but Ebwin did not

love partnership, and fairly quitted Farne, leaving him alone.

The reader probably is curious to know what the brother Bartholomew could find to do in his new abode. The question however is easily answered ; he had as much to do as any labourer who has to work for his daily bread. He had a cow to tend, and a field, which must be dug and be sown with barley, and his crops were to be reaped and gathered in when the harvest time came round. A strange labourer indeed he was with his monkish mantle, over which was thrown a rough and sleeveless cloak lined with shaggy skin ! When he laid down the spade or the reaping hook, his labours were not over ; he had a boat in which he wrestled with the wild waves which run violently among the islets and rocks along the coast, or paddled over the smooth sea where it lay bright and glittering beneath the summer sun. Thus he was fisherman, grazier, and labourer all at once, and as will appear by and by, he combined the office of pilot as well. But whatever he was doing, the wind might drive the rain and the spray, and the sun might shed its burning beams upon his head, which was never covered by cowl or cap. This however was but his external employment. There are wonders in the spiritual world of which men unused to meditation have no conception, and which are to be the employment of the blessed in heaven. Even on earth the holy doctors have spent their lives in drawing them out in words ; the cherubim desire to look into them ; no one then need be surprised if a hermit could find occupation in wondering at such mysteries as the Holy Trinity and all the events involved in the Incarnation of the Lord. Every day he offered up the immaculate Lamb in sacrifice to

His Father on the altar of St. Cuthbert's oratory. All day long, whatever he was doing, and a great part of every night, he was either singing the psalms of David or kneeling in intercessory prayer. The words of the psalms were sweeter than honey to his throat, and he felt them burning in his heart the more he repeated them, so that he said the whole psalter every day once, twice, or even three times.

While he was thus striving to have his conversation in heaven, he took care to take up his cross with Christ, lest his thoughts should degenerate into a luxurious self-contemplation. He who suffers with his Lord feels quite sure of the reality of heaven, and Bartholomew bearing his cross over the rugged stones of Farne, sympathized, so to speak, with Him who was dead and is alive, in a way which few can understand. A rough shirt of hair was worn by him next to his skin ; the few hours which he could spare from psalmody and prayer during the night, were spent upon a pallet from which the hardest of the world's soldiers would have shrunk. It was simply a few bed coverings thrown upon a hurdle ; surely no very loud alarm would be needed to rouse a man from such a bed as this. Long fasts and a perpetual abstinence from meat subdued his body to his soul ; for the first few years of his sojourn on the island, he used to eat the fish which he had caught by his own labour ; but he afterwards gave up even this poor indulgence. Prayer and fasting are the weapons appointed by our blessed Lord to subdue every kind of evil spirit. He Himself, though clothed in the flesh that had sinned was invincible, because He was the Lord from heaven ; and yet He fasted for forty days, and at last felt the pangs of hunger before he encountered the wily tempter. How then could His ser-

vant fire in the place of devils without putting on the armour which the Lord had sanctified for his use.

4. How brother Bartholomew was not always alone.

Stern as was his mode of life, Bartholomew's body was not worn, nor his spirit broken ; his face instead of being pale and emaciated, had a healthful colour ; "so that," says the monk, "one would have supposed him to have pampered his body on dainties." Sadness he ever accounted to be a sin, and his blithe countenance and cheerful speech bore witness to the doctrine which he professed. And he soon found that hermit as he was, he would have numerous opportunities of testing his kindness of heart and sweetness of temper. The island had ever been from time to time visited by Norwegian and Danish sailors, and the poor fishermen who lived on the opposite coast often came to pray in St. Cuthbert's oratory before they began their night of toilsome labour. These were the poor ones of the earth, and the hermit delighted in instructing them. When the northern sailors were windbound in this rugged part, he soothed their impatience and even from his own little store contrived to help them when their provisions failed. He once even killed his cow, when he had nothing else to set before some poor strangers who had nothing to eat. His kindness won the hearts of the rough sailors, and his holiness taught them reverence for the Lord whose servant he was. Christ also enlightened the hermit's soul, so that he was able to foretell the dangers of the weather ; and if he bade them go in God's name and blessed them, they would *always* set sail though the black clouds scudded across

the sky, and the winds howled and the waves were dashed against the capes which stretched beyond each other along the shore. They applied to him in every difficulty, and he thus had numerous opportunities of tempering their ferocity ; they believed that all his warnings came to pass, and hardly durst disobey him. On one occasion a boy, belonging to a vessel, had gone down into the boat to fish, and had forgotten to tie it to the stern ; the consequence was, that the boy was carried off by the current among the rocks and shoals. The poor sailors as usual came to the hermit's cell, and cried out, "Brother Bartholomew, come and help us." He came out smiling and said, "Why do ye call me, and what will ye have me do?" On hearing of their trouble, he accompanied them on board their vessel, and (though it does not appear how) the boy and the boat soon appeared safe and sound. The captain immediately seized on the lad and took up a stick to punish him severely. The hermit stayed the hand of the brutal man, and bade him remember that no one was to be punished in this holy island. The captain replied that he was not in the island, but on the deck of his vessel ; and although the holy man foretold that he should suffer for his cruelty, he beat the boy unmercifully. When the vessel returned, the sailors told brother Bartholomew that the captain had died the second day of the voyage. It was not long however before the fame of his sanctity brought visitors of a different stamp from his poor friends the sailors. Every man who lives under a sense of right and wrong must often have been troubled not only with temptations to visitations of duty, but with perplexities as to what in particular cases is his duty. He who lets himself quietly float down the stream of life, knows nothing of the

mysteries of his own being, and of the troubles which may arise in the soul of a Christian apparently without external cause ; but they who venture more boldly forth for Christ's sake, soon find that they have an inward as well as an outward cross to bear. " They who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the wonders of the Lord in the deep." The soul of the penitent too is in fearful need of guidance when first the whole horrors of sin bursts upon it. For cases such as these, Christianity has created a science of spiritual things, and all the fearful diseases of the religious mind have been examined and classified by Catholic doctors. Yet after all none is so well qualified to carry the theory of this science into practice as he who has learnt by intense self-examination, and by spiritual asceticism to know himself and the wiles of the tempter. It is a gentle craft which soothes the aching soul, and pours oil and wine into the wounds of him who has been half dead ; and Bartholomew soon found that his fame as a physician brought men from all parts to kneel at his feet. Men of all ranks came before him in this tribunal of confession, and many a high born oppressor of the poor bowed down, and trembled before the goat-skin garment of the poor hermit. Who but such a confessor could have forced men like the wild border barons of the north to relax their iron grasp on the spoils of the poor and to atone for their sins by penance ? Nor was this all : many a poor monk who was afflicted with dryness of heart, and went through his offices with listlessness and distaste, was taught by him to be patient till Christ visited his soul with the waters of consolation.

The sweet gentleness of his temper was such that it *appeared* in his countenance and his gait. Even the

wild birds on the sea shore learned not to fly away at the approach of the figure, which glided gently by them on the sea-shore, or so often remained immovable wrapt in contemplation. The habits of the sea gulls and cormorants which abound on that lonely island seem to have struck Galfridus with admiration. The eyder ducks especially raised his wonder ; they came regularly at certain seasons in large flocks to deposit their eggs, and while sitting in their nests never feared the approach or even the touch of man. When however the young ones were hatched, they became as wild as ever, and the whole party took to the waters again, and migrated from the island. Bartholomew allowed no one to cast stones at the birds : he even tamed one of them, which came regularly to feed out of his hand every day. Unfortunately however when he was out fishing, a hawk pursued this poor bird into the chapel, and killed it, leaving the feathers and the bones lying on the portal of the holy place. The assassin however could not find his way out of the chapel, and kept wheeling round and round the building, beating against the windows and the walls. At this time brother Bartholomew entered and found the cruel bird with its talons and bill still bloody. He mourned bitterly over the fate of his poor favourite, and caught the hawk ; he kept it for two days without food, to punish it for its crime, and then, seized with compassion, let go his guilty prisoner. At another time the Saint was sitting on the sea shore, when he was surprised to feel a cormorant close by his side, pulling with its bill the corner of his garment. He rose and followed the bird along the beach, till he came to a hole in the rock down which one of the young ones had fallen. He soon extricated

the trembling bird from its danger, and restored it to its mother.

As brother Bartholomew had taken upon himself that mode of life of which our blessed Lord gave a model when he retired into the wilderness, so he suffered also the same sort of temptations. The wild and lonely island on which he served Christ, had always, as we have said, the reputation of being the special abode of evil spirits. Desolate places have often an ill name; amid the hum of worldly occupations and the glare of day, Satan appears not, for men think not of him, and why should he arouse them from their security? but when men of God retire into desolate places to serve Christ, then Satan unmask himself, for they have no lethargy in which he would leave them, and they have ventured into the wilderness, his own peculiar dwelling place. They are his open enemies, and he has been known to meet them openly. As the devil under loathsome shapes had striven to frighten away St. Antony, so he attacked Bartholomew. Foul and hideous shapes of wild beasts seemed to frisk about him when he was at his prayers; and frightful visages grinned upon him out of the darkness. He often felt a hand plucking his cowl when he was on his knees, and even at the very altar the devil strove to divert his attention by seizing the border of his chasuble. One dark morning, when matins were over, and the lamp in the oratory was extinguished, as he was lying prostrate on the steps of St. Mary's altar, he felt a weight over all his limbs and a choking sensation in his throat, which he ever attributed to the evil spirit. For some time he was unable to speak, but at last he shook off the impediment, and cried upon St. Mary for help. This is but a specimen of the attacks under which he suffered, and against

which his only weapons were the sign of the cross and the holy water, with which he sprinkled his cell.

5. *How Prior Thomas lived and died at Farne.*

For five years did the hermit remain at Farne, the only inhabitant of the island ; but events were taking place at Durham which were to furnish him with a companion in his hermitage. The Prior Laurence had died in the meanwhile, and had been succeeded by Prior Absolon, who had died also, and had left the dignity to a brother of the monastery, named Thomas. Up to this time internal peace seems to have reigned at Durham, but now they had got a Bishop who seemed anxious to be Bishop and Prior at once. The Priors of Durham were great men indeed ; when William of Carilpho replaced the secular canons with lay monks of St. Benedict, he gave the Prior all the ancient rights of the dean of the chapter, and many more besides. Many fair manors and broad lands were then given to the convent and carefully separated from the property of the see. Over these the Prior had the rights of a feudal baron, with Sak and Sok, Tol and Theam, and Infangthief, and¹ all the various powers which have to our ears a most barbarous sound, but which nevertheless conveyed a most substantial privilege. Besides which the Prior sat in a stall on the left hand side of the choir, with all the rights of an Abbot ; he appointed all the officials of the convent, and he officiated at the

¹ Sok and Sak imply the right of holding a court, Tol, that of levying tolls. Theam that of restraining and judging bondsmen. Infangthief, that of punishing a thief caught on one's own fief.

altars of the Cathedrals as in his own Church. But though the Prior of Durham was a great man, the Bishop was a greater, and a prelate now sate on the throne who was disposed to make the most of his authority. Hugh Pudsey had been vehemently opposed by the Cistercian interest, that is, by Henry Archbishop of York, and by St. Bernard, but on the death of Eugenius had succeeded in obtaining the confirmation of his election from his successor. He was a magnificent prelate, and afterwards offered Richard to accompany him at the head of his own troops to the Holy Land. The warlike monarch however preferred the Bishop's money to his personal services, and left him behind as High Justiciar of England. It should be said however for Hugh Pudsey, that the monks do not seem to have disliked, though they feared him; at least he did not go so far as his successor, who turned away the water courses of the monks, attempted to force his way into the chapter, and all but plucked the Prior down from the altar one feast of St. Cuthbert.² However Hugh Pudsey seems to have reigned absolute in the Abbey, and when the Prior Thomas opposed his will, the monks were weak enough to allow him to be deposed in direct violation of their original charter. Thomas, weary of the bickerings and cabals among which he had been living, determined to spend the rest of his days in strict penitence at Farne.

The coming of this new inmate was a trial to Bartholomew; he had as yet been uncontrolled in his religious exercises, he had now to consult the comfort of another. It was now to be proved whether he was so wedded to his austerities as not to give up as many of

² Anglia Sacra. vol. i. 728.

them as were shown to be against the will of God. He began well, for he threw off the hair shirt which he had now worn for five years, because from long usage it had become foul and fetid, and would disgust his companion. An unhappy cause of discussion however occurred, which marred the harmony even of this small society. Thomas could not bear the long fasts to which Bartholomew was accustomed, and Bartholomew would not remain at his meals as long as Thomas wished. The ex-Prior, though the brother in every respect gave up to his will, grew angry and called him a hypocrite. Bartholomew remained silent under his reproaches, but could not wait to endure them ; he fled back to the monastery of Durham, and the brethren were one day astonished to see this strange figure rise up as it were from the invisible world among them. Thomas immediately recognized his fault, and bewailed the loss of his companion with tears. It was not however till the Prior entreated, and the convent commanded, and the Bishop warned, that brother Bartholomew could be prevailed upon to return to Farne. This affair was however of use to both : Thomas learned to command his temper, and Bartholomew also learned a lesson of patience. From that day forth they lived together in the greatest harmony. Another advantage was gained ; the convent promised to supply them with a stock of provisions and a suit of clothes every year, so that he could now give alms and better supply the wants of his friends the sailors from the produce of his own labour. It is not known how long Thomas remained on the island ; it is probable however that his weary pilgrimage was soon ended. The closing scene of it is all that is recorded. A brother of the convent, who was present, relates that while angels floated before the eyes of

the dying man, Bartholomew, who was watching by his side, saw a foul and hideous monster crouching in a corner of the room, and mourning over the future glory of the soul which was passing away ; and it was some time before he could drive it away with the holy water which lay as usual near the bed of death.

6. *How brother Bartholomew closed his days in peace.*

The even tenor of a hermit's life does not admit of much variety, and little remains to be told though he lived in all forty-two years and six months on the island. Towards the close of his life the invisible world seems several times to have opened upon him in visions. William, a monk of Durham, related to Galfridus how in the dead of night he was reciting with Bartholomew the office of the blessed Virgin, when he saw through the east window the sky shining with an intense supernatural blaze, which lighted the whole of the dark oratory. The same brother also related to Galfridus a vision which he had heard from the hermit's lips. Bartholomew said that on the joyful night of our Lord's nativity, after having said the midnight mass, he had quitted St. Cuthbert's chapel to see if morning had yet dawned upon the sea, and it was time to begin the second mass ; on returning to the oratory he was astonished to see at the altar a priest of a venerable aspect in pontifical vestments ready to officiate. In awe and wonder he drew near, and the priest went through the Holy Sacrifice, and then vanished away leaving on Bartholomew's mind the certainty that the blessed Cuthbert had descended to officiate in the chapel in which he had passed so many hours when on

earth. All these things prepared the hermit to expect his end, and he felt quite sure that he was to die, when one night as he was watching in prayer, his bell rung three times with a low and gentle sound, though no human hand had touched it. Shortly after this, on Ascension-day, 1193, he fell ill, though his disease seems to have been old age rather than any other. He told some of his visitors that his end was approaching, and the brethren of Lindisfarne from that moment often came to see him ; some monks of Coldingham whom he especially loved, also came to visit him for the last time. For seven weeks during which his illness lasted, he neither ate nor drank. For many years before, he had had no bed but the hard ground, and now he would not allow one to be made, but remained in a sitting posture, sometimes even rising and walking about. But whatever he did he was wrapt in prayer, and hardly spoke at all. Shortly before he died, the brethren who were standing around were frightened by strange and loud noises on the roof, and one fancied that a shapeless form had alighted on the ground, close behind him. The servant of God roused himself, and said, "Wretch, what dost thou here ? thou hast lost thy labour, for thou canst find nothing in me." The brethren asked him where he would be buried ; he answered, "I would have my body lie here, where I hope that my spirit will be received by its Creator, and where I have fought during a very little time for the Lord, and have suffered many tribulations for that consolation which is in heaven." On the feast of the Nativity of St. John Baptist, he fell asleep in the Lord. As soon as his soul had passed away, a brother of Lindisfarne dreamed that Bartholomew was dead. He immediately awoke the convent, and a party of monks at once manne

little vessel, and crossed the waters which separate Farne from the Holy Island. When these hooded sailors had brought their vessel into the little harbour, they found that the brother had spoken truth. Bartholomew was lying dead ; not far from him, they found a stone coffin which he had some time before procured. When it had arrived, he had laid himself down full length within it, and had found that it was too short. With his own hands he then had chiselled out the stone till it was large enough to contain his whole body. In this coffin which he had prepared, they now laid him with many tears.³ He was buried on the south side of the chapel, close to the fountain which sprung from the earth at St. Cuthbert's prayers. There his body probably still lies, forgotten and unknown. The spirit however of the holy men who once lived in Farne seems still to dwell there. It was on Bartholomew's island that that christian maiden lived who not many years ago ventured her life to save the crew of a shipwrecked vessel, and whom God has now taken to Himself.

³ This last circumstance is mentioned in the Bodleian manuscript before mentioned. The Bollandists unfortunately lost the last pages of their manuscript, and therefore only copied the close of the Saint's life from Capgrave. It should be added, that the Bollandists mention several English martyrologies in which St. Bartholomew is named on the 24th of June.

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